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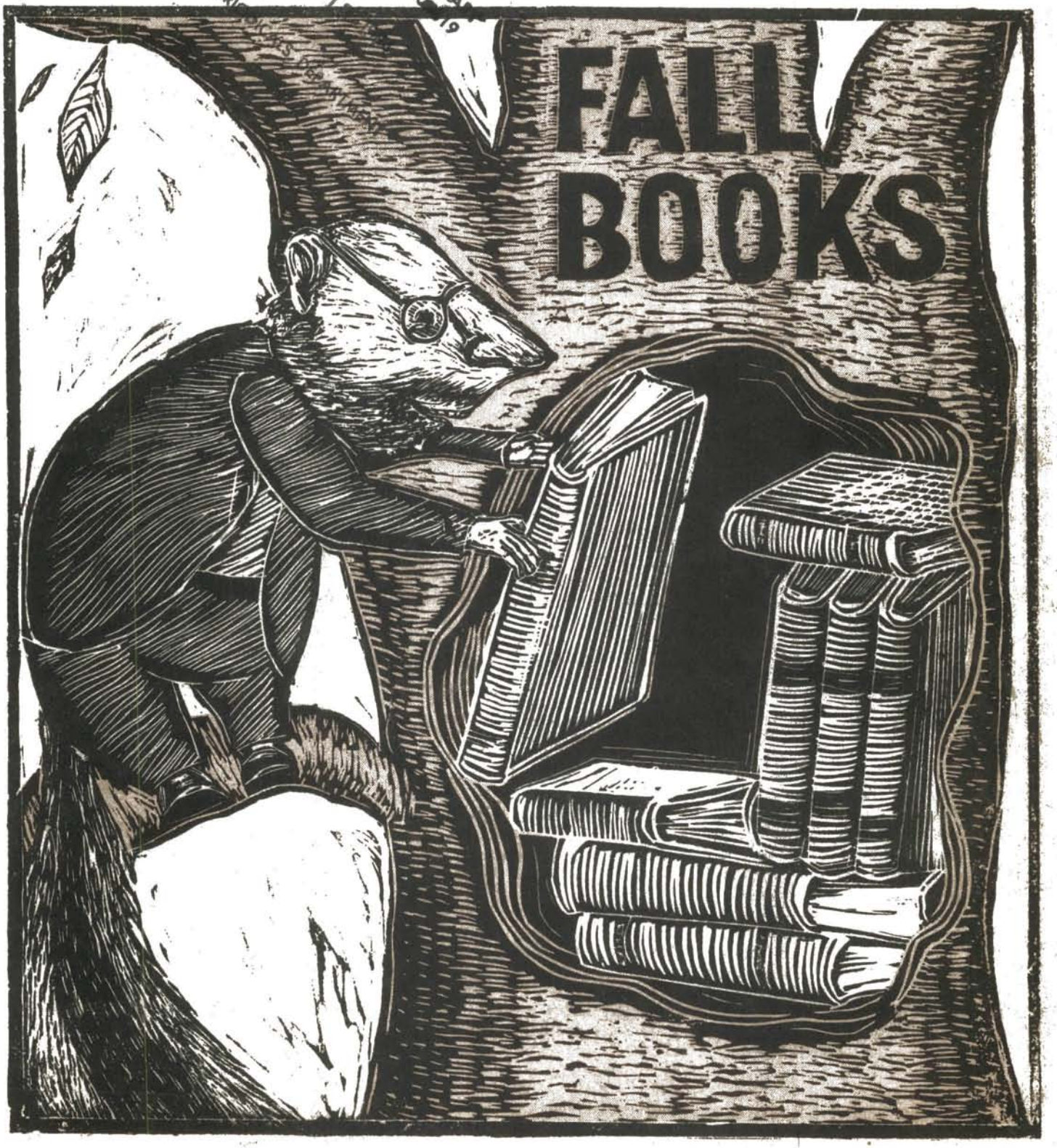

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LETTERS.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Sugar Grove, Ohio

Christopher Hitchens ought to be more circumspect about describing anyone as "brainless" ["Minority Report," Sept. 22]. His own intellect hardly seems to be towering. Has Hitchens ever examined what Plato, Augustine, Reinhold Niebuhr or, if he prefers, Nietzsche have written about the interplay between religious conviction and political decision? His superficial treatment indicates that he has spent too much time feeding at the intellectual troughs frequented by Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly and Madalyn Murray O'Hair and not enough hours immersed in the literature relevant to the subject.

Hitchens writes, "I believe I'm quite capable of supporting justice in Central America, civil rights at home, trade unions in Poland, peace in the Middle East and a number of other causes whether a church agrees with these propositions or not." Fine, but who cares? He has no credibility to bring against the philistine who replies to him: "All those propositions require submission to a heteronomously imposed value system which is nothing but a projection of subjective guilt feelings upon the body politic. What is 'good' is what is effective, and what is most effective is the autonomous application of force. So you can prattle on to your heart's content about reform, rationality and enlightenment, but all your good intentions spring from so much superstitious illusion." He may consider this philosophy to be discredited, but is it not the unspoken ideology behind Salvadoran death squads, West Bank expropriation, South African apartheid and the nuclear arms race? Hitchens apparently believes that people murder, rape and pillage because they don't know any better. Give me a break!

His treatment of the dispute among Geraldine Ferraro, Archbishop John J. O'Connor and Gov. Mario Cuomo misses the point entirely. No one has denied O'Connor the right to present his views on abortion. The controversy has arisen primarily within the Roman Catholic Church itself because O'Connor has been perceived to have exceeded his proper authority by insinuating his beliefs into a partisan, political event in a manner threatening to a fragile tradition of democratic pluralism. That criticism may not be airtight, but petty attacks on Ferraro shed no light on the fundamental issues.

Finally, Hitchens, for crying out loud, inform yourself at least in a rudimentary fashion before wading into a theological thicket. You seem to think that any time the Pope says anything in Rome, he is speaking ex cathedra. The doctrine of infallibility has been invoked only once, and that was years ago in relation to the church's teaching on the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. Now you tell me, What does that have to do with John Paul II's low regard for liberation theology?

Dave LeMoine, Pastor
St. Matthew Lutheran Church

CITIZEN ACTION & OTHER RIGHTS

Silver Spring, Md.

The Nation's September 29 special issue on the Burger Court was superb, and frightening. But somehow the articles by Burt Neuborne, "Taking Away the Right to Sue," and Norman Redlich, "Some Cracks in the Wall," overlooked the Court's 1982 ruling in *Valley Forge Christian College v. Americans United* (5 to 4, with Sandra Day O'Connor casting the deciding vote). In that case the Court overruled the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and held that neither taxpayers nor organizations have standing to challenge the giveaway of government "surplus" property to a fundamentalist seminary, thereby reducing citizen access to the Federal courts and further chipping away at the First Amendment's establishment clause.

As a plaintiff in *Valley Forge*, I sat appalled in the Supreme Court as Reagan's Solicitor General, Rex Lee, urged the Court to revoke even the taxpayer standing to sue in establishment cases, which the Court had approved in 1968 in *Flast v. Cohen*.

The remedy, obviously, is to have a President who will not let Jerry Falwell pass on his judicial appointments.

Edd Doerr
Americans for Religious Liberty

NEUBORNE REPLIES

New York City

I agree that *Valley Forge* has made it harder to enforce what is left of the establishment clause. But its effect should not be overstated. *Valley Forge* did not overrule the holding in *Flast v. Cohen* that taxpayers generally have standing to challenge government attempts to tax and spend for religious purposes. Rather, *Valley Forge* refused to extend that very liberal view of standing to government attempts to give property to religious bodies. Wrong, yes. Disastrous, no.

Burt Neuborne
American Civil Liberties Union

UNION DEMOCRACY?

Rockville, Md.

Arthur Fox's attack on the Supreme Court's decision in *Finnegan v. Leu* is misplaced, and stands the concept of union democracy on its head ["Showing Workers Who's the Boss"]. Apparently Fox believes that union democracy is furthered by the creation of a federally protected union bureaucracy beyond the control of elected union leaders. The business agents in that case lost their status as union employees, not as union members, and thus were properly held not to be covered by the Landrum-Griffin Act.

Moreover, they were dismissed by an incoming elected union leader who legitimately felt that, since they had opposed his election, they would not be able to support his policies. If there is an "obvious analogy" to be made between those union employees and public employees, as Fox insists, it is to public employees who make and carry out the policy of the President—employees who are not protected when the President or his party loses an election. Thus, it no more strengthens union democracy to insist that an elected union official retain holdover appointees dedicated to obstruct his or her policies than it would strengthen electoral democracy to protect, say, Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan from ouster by a President-elect Fritz Mondale.

Furthermore, the business agents had an obvious option to invoking Landrum-Griffin. They could have organized a union and negotiated language restraining their employer's power to dismiss them. And this without the intrusion of a Federal judge into the internal affairs of a worker organization.

Norman M. Gleichman, Counsel
Communications Workers of America

FOX REPLIES

Washington

Of course the President must be able to appoint his Cabinet. Unions, however, bear the crucial distinction that Norman Gleichman conveniently ignores. Business agents are no more Cabinet officers than are the attorneys in a district attorney's office. Like the assistant D.A.s, business agents must investigate and prosecute cases—in their case, members' grievances alleging employer violations of labor agreements. Their jobs do not involve the development or implementation of policy. Assistant D.A.s cannot be fired for their political views or associations, in spite of the fact that Congress has never enacted a law requiring prosecutors' offices to be democratic. It has done so for unions.

If union business agents occupied politically sensitive positions, *Finnegan v. Leu* might make sense. The real shame is that the decision is being interpreted by unions and some courts to permit top union brass to remove subordinate *elected* officers who refuse to toe their line. Even elected job stewards are being removed, despite the fact that they are the union equivalent of police officers on foot patrol. Members are being denied representation, dissent on union governing boards is being repressed and oligarchy, if not outright tyranny, is flourishing as a result of the Supreme Court's decision.

Arthur Fox

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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EDITORIALS.

After the Fall

A few weeks ago, pollsters with nothing much better to do asked a sampling of citizens in select European countries about their preference in the American election. The majority in England (which had recently returned the conservative Margaret Thatcher to power) voted for Walter Mondale. The French (who have a Socialist President and parliament) chose Ronald Reagan. Of course there are any number of possible analyses of those results. One is that fickle electorates are likely to choose what they do not have over what they've got. But since the French results have coincided with the American, it seems more instructive to focus on that set. From Paris, Reagan looks a lot like Charles de Gaulle: the personification of national ego, the symbol of authority, the Christian with his cross and—to reach back a bit further into French history—the man on a horse. And from Washington, too, Reaganism bears an uncanny resemblance to Gaullism: a personal mission that has become a political movement, a bit fascistic perhaps, but a comfortable crusade which protects the powerful and precludes the poor.

Those without a sense of irony about American politics may find it hard to believe that a man of such limited vision, mediocre intellect and narrow comprehension can cut a

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figure of world-historical importance. But the election of 1984 was not about the best and the brightest. It was about national morale, and as General Eisenhower used to say, Morale is what wins battles. Mondale may have been right about the economic hard times ahead, about the dangers of war and intervention, about social inequity and the growing frustrations of the disempowered. But he gave the majority of voters no cause for optimism. He held out the dubious promise of taxes instead of profits, continued cold war rather than global triumph, scarcity against aggrandizement. Reagan sent spirits soaring with his wild predictions of an inflation-free, fully employed, high-growth and high-tech society where rich white old men—people much like himself—would be in command and control. And once again, voters chose the doctor who promised a cure over the one who said they must live for another term with their malaise. If it is assumed that all American politicians lie, at least Reagan's lies were uplifting.

Reagan's 'Realignment'

In the last hours of the campaign, Reagan harped on the notion that a grand realignment was under way, which would radically alter the relationship that had held since 1932 between the two major parties. What he meant, with characteristic simplicity, was that the Republicans would become a permanent majority. But the continued strength of the Congressional and local sectors of the Democratic Party suggests that changes of a different order must be identified. They involve the composition and the direction of both parties and, beyond that, the conduct of Presidential campaigns.

Republicans and some Democrats accused Mondale of extremism and radicalism, of obeisance to special economic and ideological interests and of adherence to the unpopular principles of George McGovern. But Mondale was no baby of the left. A decent man, his most imaginative act was his selection of Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate. But he was adopted, with no kicking or screaming, by the centrist establishment of his party, and he expressed their neoliberal program, which was no program at all but a rhetoric of lowered expectations laced with limp protestations of patriotism and appeals to altruism and compassion. Whether he liked it or whether he acknowledged it, this was Ben Wattenberg's dream campaign; the poly-sci pragmatists, A.F.L.-C.I.O. bureaucrats and party pros around the country wanted neoliberalism and they got it. It was faithful to the fiscal demands of the New York banks, the foreign policy of the national security community and the corporate policy developed in economics departments across the length and breadth of Eastern Massachusetts. When Mondale signed on to that package at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco ("I will raise taxes"), his electoral fate was sealed. The party's right-wing constituencies correctly perceived that they could get more for their money from Reagan. The left, also correctly, felt cheated, excluded and demeaned. The powerful demands that had been expressed in the Jackson campaign and the Rainbow Coalition—on issues of class, race and international affairs—were by and large ignored in the Mondale campaign. Only an antipathy to Reagan and a fear of nuclear holocaust united Democratic voters; a button which appeared in late October expressed the bottom line of the Democratic appeal: "Vote Mondale/At Least You May Live To Regret It."

A Politics of Opposition

There is bound to be a long contest for power and leadership in the Democratic Party, and its lines will be drawn in a very few weeks. The many contradictions of Reaganism and the several problems the Administration will soon face will engender a new politics of opposition, both within and without conventional political structures. If, as expected, the business cycle works its black magic in the marketplace and the first Reagan recovery gives way to the second Reagan recession, alternative economic programs will be formulated in Congress and at the grass-roots level. If Reagan makes good on his gleeful election night exclamation—"You ain't seen nothin' yet"—and makes more military moves around the world, the inevitable protests that come in response will give energy and substance to the opposition. Tax reform, which is supposed to be high on the Administration's legislative agenda this winter, will provide an opportunity for those who favor economic redistribution to struggle with others who will settle for bureaucratic simplification.

Another struggle is about to begin among the Republicans. The lure of an empty White House (in 1988) and the limitations of a lame-duck President, whatever his electoral mandate, will set politicians against each other and blocs to vying for power. If Jesse Helms makes a bid for the chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (in the wake of Charles Percy's defeat), not only Democrats will be moved to organize against him. Even before the final vote tallies were in, Republican Senator Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota and Democratic Senator Joe Biden of Delaware went on television to denounce the Helms possibility. That fight, if it materializes, will by its nature be a struggle against Reaganism, for Helms is the most militant ideologue of the movement and its principal spokesman in the Senate.

Republican moderates have taken a drubbing in the last few years, but they have strong local constituencies—in the Northeast and the Pacific Coast states, for instance—and they have a perfect opportunity for picking up Reagan's

COMING UP

"The Strange Correspondence of Morris Ernst and John Edgar Hoover: 1939–1964"

By Harrison Salisbury

An Account, Based on Newly Released Material From the Files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, of a Bizarre (and Disturbing) Epistolary Friendship Between the Eminent Civil Libertarian and the Nation's Top Cop.

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yuppie voters when any one of a number of possible axes falls on that ingénue constituency. If Reagan is forced to delete tax deductions for home and condominium mortgages and for interest payments on credit accounts, a major revolt will develop among those most affected: young families on the way up. It is easier to imagine a moderate Republican strategy for including such people in an electoral coalition than it is to think of a successful Democratic one.

The outcome of certain local and Congressional races this year and a preliminary analysis of the behavior of voters in various blocs indicate that the internal shifts within both parties will be more significant than the overall realignment. The defeat of Republican Raymond Shamie (a former John Bircher) in the Massachusetts senatorial contest confirms that the Republican right in that state (and in most of New England) is a permanent minority faction. Elliot Richardson, the essence of Republican moderation, lost to Shamie in the primary, but he would probably have beaten Democratic liberal John Kerry in November. On the other hand, Democratic Representative Paul Simon's victory over Senator Percy in Illinois suggests that progressive Democrats can put together winning coalitions if they speak to the demands of their various constituent groups.

A New Coalition

Everyone can find a comforting or confirmatory lesson in local elections, for there are always special conditions and unique cases to take into account. But as T.S. Eliot wrote, "All cases are unique, and very similar to others." The similarities are what ultimately matter. And what is similar about all the elections beneath the Presidential one is that coalitions do count.

It should be clear enough now that the Democratic coalition cannot be held together by appeals to past practices and traditional loyalties. Mondale lost most of his vaunted special interests because he was not able to offer them anything significantly more than, or sufficiently different from, what his opponent did. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition pointed to another way: the fusion of grass-roots demands into a political movement. It was the only real left alternative to the ideological drama of Reaganism, and as such it provided the most excitement in a lackluster Democratic campaign. It could not get further than it did because the essential hard work had barely begun within the coalition's constituencies.

Because it happened at a particular time and place in history, the Jackson campaign faced insurmountable problems of leadership, image and organization. But the model it offered the Democrats should not be forgotten. The kind of coalition it envisioned depends on political organization and, for want of a better phrase, consciousness-raising inside its member groups. The burden falls on political progressives in unions, in the Jewish community, in ethnic organizations, in the women's and gay movements, in rural areas and inner-city ghettos, among conservationists, nuclear protesters and Central America solidarity groups, to develop the bases for unity.

The 1984 election may well have finished off the old Democratic coalition, weak and feeble after years of neglect and disrespect. A new one is struggling to be born, and the time is ripe for delivery.

Don't Write – Sue

Time was if someone said something wrong or unfair about you in print, you wrote a letter to the editor. Now it seems that a libel suit has replaced the 20-cent stamp as a way of sending a message. So Gen. William Westmoreland sues CBS and launches a trial that, like the deficit, will probably plague our grandchildren. Former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon sues *Time*. Mr. Chow, a Chinese restaurant in New York City, sues the *Guide Gault & Millau* for beefing about its sweet and sour pork. Donald Trump sues *Chicago Tribune* architectural critic Paul Gapp for ridiculing Trump's projected tower in lower Manhattan. Right-wing organizations such as the Washington-based American Legal Foundation specialize in bringing libel suits against the press, but even leftists are not immune to libel fever. William A. Reuben recently filed suit against Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton for their treatment of his work in their book, *The Rosenberg File*. Litigiousness of this sort leads swiftly to a situation like England's, where the threat of libel hangs in the air as an efficient form of censorship. Our Fall Books issue is a nice occasion to reflect on the fact that the resultant English cautiousness in both book publishing and book reviewing should be an unhappy prospect for American writers.

In 1982 the American Civil Liberties Union announced its opposition to libel suits in cases involving issues of public concern. Public debate, in the A.C.L.U.'s view, occurs whenever speech relates to the public position or status of public officials or figures, or when it relates to anyone, public or private, on a subject of public concern. "False and reckless speech is undesirable," said A.C.L.U. national director Ira Glasser, "but even more undesirable are trials to decide which speech should be suppressed."

Giant corporations like CBS have the resources to defend themselves against suits like Westmoreland's but, unwilling to pay the rising cost of controversy, they are likely to refrain from criticizing public officials. Private individuals who can't defend against a libel suit, even a frivolous one, may become fearful of monitoring police practice, blowing the whistle on dishonest contractors, reviewing restaurants unfavorably or even writing critical articles at all [see Eve Pell, "Libel as a Political Weapon," *The Nation*, June 6, 1981].

The A.C.L.U.'s position accords with our own view on libel. As Aryeh Neier has noted in these pages, "Libel suits pose a threat to free speech and the dissemination of information" ["The Case for a Right of Reply," October 8, 1983]. Public officials shouldn't sue the media, no matter what, and writers, who have access to other forums, shouldn't sue other writers. Magazines, not the courts, are the place for such debate.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

How delightful to read of the departure of Arthur Louis Hugo Rudolph from these shores. We are all supposed to be in his debt because he designed the Saturn rocket and the Pershing missile. But death cancels all debts, and Rudolph was in the death business. Honored and well-paid in America until this year, he has renounced his American citizenship and gone back to Germany rather than face deportation. Having joined the Nazi Party in 1931, which suggests zeal rather than conformity, he rose to be overseer of the Dora concentration camp. Dora's inmates were used as slaves in the construction of Hitler's missile sites, and were worked to death in the race to build enough V-bombs to destroy London. Incentives on the production line included public hangings and torture. Deaths averaged 160 a day. Commenting on Rudolph, Neal Sher, director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, said, "It is an awful irony that his experience and expertise in rocketry had to be used in this country over the bones of so many innocent victims of Nazi Germany's crimes against humanity."

I'm sure that Sher is a decent man, but I fail to see the "irony" here. Rudolph and his type were brought to the United States not in spite of their Nazi past but because of it. It was precisely their Hitlerite expertise that was in demand. As head of the Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Policy Coordination in the late 1940s and the 1950s, Frank G. Wisner brought to this country a number of known and wanted war criminals. He recruited the leaders of the Byelorussian collaborationist regime; men who had served in the Waffen SS. He enlisted the aid of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Immigration and Naturalization Service in burying their past and creating new identities for them. The idea was to employ those debased characters in a rollback operation to liberate Eastern Europe. Wisner at least had the decency to commit suicide when all this crazed "liberating" came to nothing, but his gruesome clientele survived to get jobs with Radio Liberty and to expire, unmourned but also unpunished, in their beds. Gen. Reinhard Gehlen, who was Hitler's chief of military intelligence on the Eastern front and who must have seen a thing or two, was reincarnated by his American handlers as the head of West German espionage. He parlayed the deal through his knowledge of Communism in the East. More recently, we have learned that Klaus Barbie was recruited into the American Counter Intelligence Corps (C.I.C.) only two years after the fall of the Third Reich and only three years after he ceased to be, in the wearisome newspaper cliché, "the butcher of Lyon."

Barbie was employed by the C.I.C. as an agent in the American zone of occupied Germany until French outrage over the discovery of his employment forced him to flee to South America. This flight, too, was made possible by the C.I.C. and its wide network of friends among Croatian and Austrian Nazis. Thereafter, Barbie made himself useful to the extreme right in Bolivia (his country of adoption) as well as in Chile, Argentina and El Salvador. Those who found use for him cannot claim they were ignorant of his real identity.

If it is read against this background, the C.I.A. handbook for counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua becomes readily intelligible. How do you employ fascists while denying that your methods are fascistic and while hysterically flapping the banner of democracy? The answer is that you cannot—but you can lie about it to a gullible Congress. In Washington late last month, a new official justification for the famous terrorist manual was put forward. It now is claimed that the booklet was designed to *tame* the *contra* forces, whose fondness for sadism and pillage was becoming an embarrassment. According to Edgar Chamorro of the laughably named Nicaraguan Democratic Force (F.D.N.), the level of indiscriminate killing by his forces had reached such a pitch that the C.I.A. pamphlet was designed to steer and canalize the violence. (This ingenious excuse, incidentally, involves the first official confirmation of reports about *contra* atrocities which have long been denied.)

It seems, according to Chamorro and to C.I.A. officers, that one John Kirkpatrick (good name) visited the "rebels" in September of last year and established during his fact-finding tour that they went in for massacre, forced recruitment, torture, rape and public execution. Like the apocryphal pianist in the brothel, he affected to be shocked at this revelation. On his return to Honduras, he began work on "psychological operations in guerrilla warfare," which urged the lads to be more selective in their killing and to master such destabilizing tactics as booking Nicaraguan hotel rooms and then not showing up.

Three questions arise: One, Where do they find people like Kirkpatrick? Two, Given that his manual suggests murdering one's own side in order to create martyrs, who bombed Edén Pastora? Three, What else did anybody expect? A *contra* leader mentioned by Chamorro and known as Commander Suicide was a former Somocista National Guard officer. It seems that his associates were hurt and surprised when he "went on a rampage" of murder, kidnap and rape. Apparently he was so depressing in his addiction to these pursuits that he had to be executed by Argentine officers attached to the *contras*. What do you have to do before the Argentine right considers you a war criminal? Stoke the ovens with non-Jews?

This is being done in our name and with our money. It is being arranged by the political descendants of those who hired Barbie, Gehlen, Rudolph and the rest. (It was Frank Wisner, also, who arranged the C.I.A.'s removal of the Jacobo Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954.) They believe that fascists are mere instruments, with no recoil in the hands of those who employ them. They also believe, as the Nazis did, that nothing done against the world Communist conspiracy can be immoral. Rudolph's Pershing missile, now being pressed on a reluctant Europe, is a weapon of genocide. Rudolph, Barbie and his co-thinkers were practitioners of it. The apparent readiness to use either, or both, is a mark of where the cold war has led us and may lead us yet.

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Frustrated by two decades of conservative rule and by almost a decade of aged and infirm leadership at the top, the growing number of reform-minded Soviet officials are now, as reports from Moscow put it, "waiting for Gorbachev." He is Mikhail Gorbachev, who at 53 is the current heir apparent to Konstantin Chernenko and twenty years his junior.

Rarely, if ever, have Soviet reformers placed their hopes so squarely on one contender in a succession struggle that still lies ahead and in which they will play no direct role. They have done so out of two widely held convictions.

First, reformers believe that the only solution to the country's economic problems is a fundamental shift toward decentralized management, more incentives for industrial workers and a larger role for private enterprise and other market factors in agriculture and consumer services. Second, they are now convinced that such reforms are politically impossible until the reigning generation of Soviet leaders, enfeebled men in their 70s who began their careers under Stalin, is replaced by a vigorous post-Stalin generation that is less tied to the past, better educated and thus more competent to govern in the 1980s.

Equating generational change with policy change, reformers are counting on Gorbachev even though the actual nature of his innovative views remains concealed behind the outward conformity of "collective" leadership. In various public and private ways, Gorbachev has indicated a preference for several of their proposals. According to reports, he has even privately expressed interest in Lenin's New Economic Policy, which marketized the entire Soviet economy of the 1920s. Changes of that kind, introduced in Eastern Europe since the 1950s and now under way on a massive scale in China, are the real goal of many Soviet reformers.

But it is Gorbachev's unusual political career that really captivates reformers. With degrees in both law and agronomy, he is, at least formally, the best-educated member of the Soviet leadership since the 1920s. More important, his rapid rise to the top has been spectacular in a system where snail-like ascents through the bureaucracy are the custom and where competent 60-year-old officials languish in subordinate posts.

Until 1978, when he was suddenly brought to Moscow to be a national secretary in charge of agriculture, Gorbachev was an obscure party boss in his native province of Stavropol. Within two years he had become, at 49, the youngest full member of the Politburo, whose median membership age was over 70. His range of top-level duties continued to expand during the last years of Leonid Brezhnev and the short tenure of Yuri Andropov, even though responsibility for the chronically ill farm sector had been the ruin of other rising politicians.

Andropov's death, in February, left a leadership composed almost equally of the Stalinist and post-Stalin generations. The emergence of the septuagenarian Chernenko as the new General Secretary clearly involved a compromise between them that made Gorbachev the second-ranking member of the Secretariat. Full membership on both the Politburo and the Secretariat has always been a prerequisite for becoming General Secretary. Since only one other oligarch, 61-year-old Grigory Romanov, currently has that qualification, Gorbachev is in a strong position to become the next Soviet leader.

But the risks inherent in the position are almost equal to its powers. Number-two Soviet leaders have fared less well than have American vice presidents. Neither Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev nor Andropov ever occupied the position. And though Brezhnev became Khrushchev's heir apparent, he succeeded only because others had fallen by the wayside and because he supported Khrushchev's overthrow.

Not surprisingly, Gorbachev is already the target of rival pretenders and powerful groups with different policy interests. His opponents managed, for example, to downplay his pivotal role at the Central Committee meeting that selected Chernenko. And he did not even address the Central Committee plenum on agriculture last month, which endorsed policies unlike his own. Anti-Gorbachev forces, it seems, are rallying behind Romanov, the former party boss of Leningrad. A more conventional and hard-line politician with strong ties to the military-defense industry lobby, Romanov is widely disliked by reformers.

Even if a reform-minded Gorbachev does one day emerge as General Secretary, he will not automatically have the power to carry out meaningful economic changes against conservative opposition throughout the system. Unlike American Presidents, every General Secretary has needed at least five years to consolidate power and to build personal authority. And no Soviet leader since Stalin has been able to impose his personal policies on the Politburo, which has grown into an executive council representing a variety of vested interests, or on the recalcitrant administrative bureaucracy that must implement any policy changes.

Nor will Gorbachev have the full support of his generation. Because of the aging of the governing elite during Brezhnev's eighteen-year rule, generational conflict is playing a far greater role in Soviet politics today than ever before. But there is no united political generation, in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. Generations may rise to power, but once there they are always divided by conflicting ambitions, values and perspectives on the status quo.

The post-Stalin generation, which found a patron in the much older Andropov, will be no exception—only more vigorous. A recent Western study found, for example, that Gorbachev's contemporaries at the level of provincial party secretaries, from whom will come the next ruling elite, are polarized between those who are "complacent" and those who are "impatient" with existing policy—that is, between conservatives and reformers.

None of this means that another era of reform from above, as occurred under Khrushchev, is impossible. Only that the solution does not lie in generational change alone, and that like the chimerical savior in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Gorbachev may not come.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Who Is Harold Brodkey? What Is He?

FRANK PAGE

The day it was decided that *Belles Lettres* would publish a list of the twenty-five best writers in America, Jonathan Margin, the editor, called the staff into his office to discuss it.

"Despite our ambivalence," he said, referring to the fact that the venture was not his idea nor to his liking, "I see no reason that it should not be prosecuted with taste and wit. It is a commonplace that a magazine cannot be edited by committee, but I do want this to be a group effort. The list we arrive at should be both defensible and ingenious, responsible yet not obvious, contain surprises and conviction . . . "

Mr. Margin was too good at this sort of thing. There were times when he got caught up in his own rhetoric. Finally, he came to the point: "So I want each of you to make up your own list of the twenty-five best writers in America today. And, please, submit your choices alphabetically. We'll have to worry all too soon about the one, two, three of it. At present I merely want to see the shape of your thinking. One thing: because we should do this with a minimum of external influence I suggest we keep it inside the office." There was a stirring, and Mr. Margin looked carefully around the conference table. "Do I gather that some of you have already been busy on the phone?"

There were no demurrers.

"So be it," he said with a sigh. "Frank here," and he nodded to me, "has been detached from his regular duties to bring this matter to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion. Please get your lists to him as soon as possible."

Sure enough, the next day "Page Six" of the *New York Post* announced that *Belles Lettres* would soon choose the twenty-five best writers in America, adding—maliciously, I think—that nominations could be made by phone or in person to Jonathan Margin, editor.

Frank Page, an imaginary editor, herewith resumes his reports on Belles Lettres, *an imaginary magazine.*

The day after, Ed McDowell wrote a story in *The New York Times* saying that contrary to rumors in the publishing industry, *Belles Lettres* did not—repeat, not—plan to pick the twenty-five best writers in America. However, the next day he wrote another story to the effect that *Belles Lettres* was indeed publishing such a list, the confusion having arisen from the vehemence with which the editor, Jonathan Margin, in an interview, had denied soliciting nominations from readers.

New York's "Intelligencer" column ran an item saying that *Belles Lettres*, "the influential literary weekly, definitely *is*, as denied and then confirmed by *The Times*, naming the 25 top American scribes. The brass at Protean Publications, owners of *Belles Lettres*, are counting on the idea to liven up what they feel to be the lackluster performance by staid editor Jonathan Margin. The choice will be under the direction of new assistant editor Frank Page, whom the biggies at Protean like the looks of."

Alexander Cockburn, in his *Nation* column, said: "Jonathan Marginal, editor of *Belles Lettres*, the literary snews magazine, hopes to wake us all with his version of the twenty-five best writers in America. No need, Marginal. We can name them in our sleep. Start with Bellow, end with Updike, and one gets you ten that Charles Bukowsky doesn't make it. Snews on, O faithful readers of Beautiful Letters."

Within a few days I had all the lists and brought them to Mr. Margin.

"How are they?" he said.

"Interesting."

"That sounds ominous," he said.

"Not really. Take a look!"

He did and for rhetorical purposes read out the list of Ed Bodoni, the office manager:

> John Ashbery, Ingrid Bengis, Paul Bowles, Rita Mae Brown, Susan Brownmiller, Guy Davenport, Marilyn French, Marilyn Hacker, Jill Johnston, June Jordan, Paule Marshall, James Merrill, Kate Millett, Robin Morgan, Marge Piercy, David Plante, Adrienne Rich, Paul Robinson, May Sarton, Alix Schulman, Kate Simon, Valerie Solanis, Gloria Steinem, Alice Walker, Edmund White.

Mr. Margin looked up in wonder.

"It's a document, I agree," I said.

"Yes," he said and seemed to sink into thought for a few seconds. "Well," he then said, "you know, of course, that Ed Bodoni is a radical feminist."

"I didn't know that. She seems so pleasant."

"The thing about radical feminists," Mr. Margin said, "is that they start in fear and convert it to hatred, which they finally turn into contempt. When all the fear has been transformed into contempt they can be quite pleasant, like Ed. Watch her sometime when there is an argument between two of the men editors. A little involuntary smile plays around the mouth. I see Stalin smiling like that when Roosevelt and Churchill had words. But if you wonder why I'm interested, my second wife was a radical feminist."

"Is she no longer a radical feminist or no longer your wife?"

"Oh, no longer my wife," he said. "I'd like to keep in touch with her, but she's still working on some of the hatred. Do you realize that Virginia Wrapper's list doesn't share one name with Ed's?"

"I noticed that," I said.

Again for rhetorical purposes he read Virginia's list aloud:

> Nelson Algren, Louis Auchincloss, James Baldwin, Hortense Calisher, John Cheever, Edward Dahlberg [Mr. Margin paused, then went on], Joan Didion, J.P. Donleavy, William Gaddis, William Gass, Paul Goodman, Elizabeth Hardwick, John Hawkes, Lillian Hellman, James Jones, Jack Kerouac, Harper Lee [he paused again], Alison Lurie, William Maxwell, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price, J.D. Salinger, Diana Trilling, Lionel Trilling and Robert Penn Warren.

"Frank, didn't you tell Virginia that this was a list of living writers?"

"I thought that was understood."

"Ah, well," Mr. Margin said. "On the other hand, Chuckle Faircopy's list is almost dead center. Bellow to Updike, as that chap in *The Nation* said, the one with the nasty name."

"Chuckle's list really surprised me," I said. "I thought it would be the most eccentric of the bunch. By the way,

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what does he *do* over there in the corner besides write headlines for the reviews?"

"That's all he does," Mr. Margin said and leaned back. "Chuckle predates me, but I understand that at one time he contributed a great deal to *Belles Lettres*. Headlines were only part of his duties. But what with time and age, he fixed on the headlines. Every now and then he shows me his worksheets—twenty pages for one headline. He tells me that sometimes after working all day and at home through the evening the final version comes to him in a dream. He'll wake and write it down and then won't be able to get back to sleep from the excitement of it."

"Are the headlines that good?" I said.

"They seem quite ordinary to me," Mr. Margin said. "He recently showed me one he had worked on for two days. It was for a review of a history of New York City. It was 'New York Was Like That.'"

"What do you make of his immodest proposal?" I said. "Is it based on his headline writing?" Between Ralph Ellison and Allen Ginsberg, Chuckle had named himself as one of the twenty-five best writers in America.

"Some years ago," Mr. Margin said, "he published a few novels. They came and went. When I was appointed editor here he gave me signed copies. I put off reading them, but I could see that he wanted comment, so finally I told him that they were beautiful and profound."

"Did that satisfy him?" I asked.

"I think so, although he added, 'and funny.'"

"But you never read them."

"No. But, for God's sake, don't tell him!"

"Of course not," I said. Nor would I have. Chuckle was obviously a sad case. He looked to be in his late 50s, a tall, thin, balding man with half glasses and a weathered face. I knew he wrote the headlines for *Belles Lettres*, but I had no idea that he spent the whole week on them. The way he arched over his typewriter, suddenly pouncing into composition, I had been sure he was up to more than headlines.

"Well, what do we do, Frank?"

"We have to make up this list ourselves. Let's take Chuckle's names, smooth out the bumps, add three or four eye-catchers, tell the promotion department to warm up the suspense and publish the damn thing under a short, humble, pompous introduction."

Mr. Margin nodded and sighed philosophically.

The temptations from publishers who wanted to influence the list (Mr. Margin had expected them to be irresistible) were not forthcoming. A cutie-pie publicity girl asked me to lunch, saying that she wanted to discuss one of her authors. I pointed out to her, as she must have known, that *Belles Lettres*'s editors could not accept lunches from publishing people. She asked if that included lunches made from leftovers and served by amateur cooks in their abodes. I said I didn't think so, and we made a date. More for his amusement than anything else, I mentioned the lunch to Mr. Margin.

"Who is the author?" he said.

I told him.

"He'll be on the list."

"I more or less told her that," I said, "but she wants to talk."

"I suspect she wants to add *you* to *her* list," he said, and on the morning of the day of the lunch, he told me that I had been working too hard and should take the afternoon off. It turned out that not only did she really want to talk about her author but she was marrying him the following week.

I prepared a list from Chuckle Faircopy's, adding ten or so names so that Mr. Margin and I could move around, and considering the difference in our ages, we had an easy time of it. We struggled some over John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Mary McCarthy and Thomas Pynchon. Without telling who was for whom, I can say that we traded off gracefully.

I showed the list to Chuckle, both to tell him that the choices were basically his and also to warn him that his name would not be on it. He said that since he doubted that either Mr. Margin or I had read his books he did not take it as a slight.

Mr. Margin called the staff into his office. His secretary, Claire Tippin, had made copies of the list and distributed them like menus.

"First of all," Mr. Margin said, "I want to thank you for your extremely conscientious choices. Your lists constitute some of the most interesting reading I've done in recent weeks. Each was a brain scan. I seemed to see not

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only leanings and backgrounds but hard strivings to understand this often confusing American scene. The list you have in your hands is a weighted consensus. The 'weight' comes from Frank and me and represents perhaps two or three names that did not appear on any of your own lists. I'm sorry the list is not longer, that it does not include each and every writer that each and every one of you put forth. Such a list would be an invaluable document, far more interesting than this 'essence' that we shall show to the public. Such a list would have revealed the true taste of the editors of the most influential literary publication in the language. And consider: suppose, just suppose, we had such a choice from a similar group of London intellectuals in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death. What a contribution that would have been to the history of ideas!"

Mr. Margin went on like this for a while and finally asked for comments.

"Why is Mary McCarthy, who has lived in France half the time, on a list of the best writers in America?"

"By 'in America,'" Mr. Margin said, "we merely mean 'American citizen.' Just as I.B. Singer is on the list although he came here as a young adult and doesn't write in English."

"In that case, George Steiner is an American citizen living in England. Why isn't he on the list?"

Mr. Margin nodded for me to answer.

"Many reasons," I said.

"If by 'best' we mean 'most important,' surely Michael Harrington should be on the list."

"'Best' only means 'best,' I'm genuinely sorry to say," Mr. Margin said.

"I feel we have pointedly excluded engaged writers. Surely Norman Podhoretz is as influential as any writer in America."

"Then we'd have to include Irving Kristol and Hilton Kramer," I said. "You wouldn't want that, would you?"

"There are no critics on the list. I want to nominate Alfred Kazin again."

"*Again*?" Mr. Margin said.

"Are we avoiding experimental writers?"

"As I understand it," Mr. Margin said, "an experimental writer is a writer whose experiment has failed."

"Where is Renata Adler?" someone asked.

No one seemed to know.

We gave the list to Mary Tooling, the wife of the publisher of Protean Publications. She called us to her office the next day. "Do you want to know what my husband said?"

We nodded.

"My husband said—and pardon my French—my husband said, 'Who the fuck is Harold Brodkey? And where the fuck is Herman Wouk?'"

"About Brodkey," Mr. Margin said, "we thought that a few offbeat names might add a certain—spin to the list."

"And Herman Wouk?" Mrs. Tooling said.

"There are many writers in America," Mr. Margin said.

"O.K., but for myself," Mrs. Tooling said, "where the fuck is . . . ," and she mentioned five American writers *she* thought should be on the list.

"If you wish," Mr. Margin said.

"I wish," Mrs. Tooling said. "And don't put them at the top. Slip them in. And another thing: This is alphabetical. We were talking one, two, three, four."

"Tool," Mr. Margin said, "that's impossible. Who is better, Bellow or Updike? Mailer or Roth? It's impossible to decide."

"Decide!" she said and rose in dismissal.

What we did was to take the last twelve names on the alphabetical list and alternate them with the first thirteen. Then we took the last eleven on the intermixed list and placed them above the first fourteen. A cryptographer would have discerned what we had done, but no one less.

Of course, the rest is history. The list, as Mrs. Tooling had prophesied, was reproduced and commented upon around the world. I reprint it here for meditative purposes:

> Allen Ginsberg, John Updike, John Hawkes, Kurt Vonnegut, Edward Hoagland, Eudora Welty, John Irving, Richard Wilbur, Mary McCarthy, Herman Wouk, Norman Mailer, Woody Allen, Bernard Malamud, Donald Barthelme, James A. Michener, Jacques Barzun, Arthur Miller, Saul Bellow, Lewis Mumford, Thomas Berger, Philip Roth, Peter De Vries, I.B. Singer, E.L. Doctorow and Anne Tyler.

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The Times of London said: "A startling affirmation of America's riches! Here is a roster that shouts 'Vigor!' England, thy child hath surpassed thee."

L'Express: "The twenty-five names hold few surprises to devotees of American literature. But the order! The ranking contains such play of point and counterpoint, such wit, so sardonic and yet so correct! That Ginsberg, the holy man of the 1960s, should emerge as the premier American writer! And that he should precede the great Updike! What outrage! What wisdom!"

Literaturnaya Gazeta: "Twenty-five writers of assent. Where are those who have asked the questions? Where are Robert Coover, Gore Vidal, Seymour Krim?"

After it was done and a great success, I again congratulated Chuckle Faircopy on his original list.

"You want to know something," he said, "I got it from the biographical entries in this," and he picked up a copy of the *American Heritage Dictionary*. "There are about thirty-five living American writers here, and I picked twenty-five."

"Twenty-four," I said.

He smiled serenely and said, "There'll be other editions." □

Shades of Shade

GARY GIDDINS

WHO'S SORRY NOW? *By Connie Francis. St. Martin's Press. 332 pp. $14.95.*

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LITTLE RICHARD. *By Charles White. Crown/Harmony. 269 pp. $15.95.*

SINATRA: An American Classic. *By John Rockwell. Random House. Illustrated. 251 pp. $29.95.*

I still hear the nasal voices of those invisibles serenading her, people with names like Sammy and Jo and Eddy and Tony and Peggy and Guy and Patty and Rex, and sentimental song hits, all of them as similar to my ear as her various candies were to my palate.

—Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita

Doris Lessing's recently publicized scam, which exposed the tribulations a famous writer faces when she publishes second-rate work under a pseudonym, is small potatoes compared with the hoax, now come to light, perpetrated by Vladimir Nabokov. The books from his so-called "invisible serenaders" trilogy, an evisceration of American pop, its creators and exegetes, begun shortly before his death in 1977 and completed by an unidentified collaborator, are available at last—each from a separate publisher, each bearing a different signature. This flawed but devastating trio of true-life novels goes beyond parody to plumb Nabokov's preoccupations with language and double or mirrored images. Its success can be measured in part by the number of reviewers who have already credited authorship to the real-life counterparts of "Connie Francis," "Charles White" and (obvious nom de plume) "John Rockwell"—all of whom, desiring to avow pop, have kept mum. Anyone familiar with Nabokov's linguistic mastery, however, cannot fail to detect his ventriloquial genius.

Here, at last, is a remembrance of heartaches and high jinks past that, while employing Nabokovian tactics we've come to know well, embraces the American esthetic head-on. The trilogy traces an arc of intercession between artist and critic, and begins with Francis detailing, Humbert-like, her heroic struggle to remain rich and humble in New Jersey; it continues with Richard's jeremiads, amplified by the critic Charles White (the name a possible reference to Dr. Blanche Schwarzmann in *Lolita*, who also combines white and black); and grinds to a thudding halt in the hierophantic commentary of Rockwell, the critic unbound. Typically, the characters are viewed through the jaded eyes of Old World expatriates: Connie Francis is really Concetta Franconero, Newark-born but obsessed with her Italian heritage; Little Richard's spokesman is Irish, though a biographical blurb remarks on his "resemblance to a staid British doctor"—possibly Melanie Weiss (again, note the wordplay), also of *Lolita*; and Rockwell, though iden-

Gary Giddins is a columnist for The Village Voice. *His book* Rhythm-a-ning *will be published in March by Oxford University Press.*

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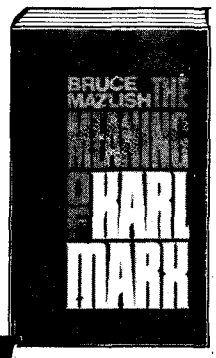

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tified as a native of San Francisco, is clearly the latest disguise (he is described as having a "Ph.D. in cultural history" and the prose style is unmistakable) of *Pale Fire*'s Charles Kinbote.

The Master's plan is evident from the first page of *Who's Sorry Now?*, a half-page encomium from Dick Clark: "I don't have a lot of personal friends. . . . Connie Francis is one of them." Little Richard's story is similarly prefaced by Paul McCartney: "He's a great guy and he's my friend today." The scrupulous attention to parallels and solecisms, and the theme of friendship and fanship, are sustained throughout, rising to a wicked crescendo in *Sinatra*, where Rockwell offers up virtuoso justifications of his idol's barbarisms. For example, when Sinatra insults female reporters ("You're nothing but a two-dollar cunt"), Rockwell hints that some cynicism about the singer's character "may seem warranted" but goes on to applaud the resultant "publicity mileage." When Sinatra opens a casino in South Africa and campaigns for Reagan, Rockwell castigates his "ideological opponents" (this is pure Kinbote) for not considering his "plausible reasons for supporting Reagan" and his "benefit to support the search for the mass killer of black children in Atlanta only a few months before his South Africa engagement." Much textual evidence suggests that Rockwell is meant to be a rock-generation Sinatra doppelgänger, as when he himself characterizes some of Sinatra's women as "a procession of dizzy blondes" or describes "film gangsters" as "models of macho bravado, antedating the rock & roll rebel." When he labels those who disagree with his confused assessment of *Trilogy* as Sinatra's "enemies," the implication is clear—they are Rockwell's enemies, too.

If the Connie Francis volume is by far the most successful of the three, one reason is its lack of critical obfuscation. The protagonist's diction is absolutely convincing in its rendition of the vernacular, yet it glitters with eloquence. Note the rhythmic triphammer repetition of the word "Jewish" in this typically incisive passage:

> When I was born, we were living on St. Mark's and Utica Avenues in Brooklyn, and Daddy was working for a Jewish man, a plumber. One day the Jewish man said, "We've gotta find a job." (It seems there was a wartime shortage of the materials needed to furnish homes. He was out of business and they were out of work.) But the Jewish plumber reassured Daddy . . .

Note, too, the capitalization of Daddy, a grotesque character to Whom Connie is devoted even though He wouldn't allow her to see the only boy she ever really loved (Bobby Darin), refused to let her perform after she was raped (because the public might think the rape didn't mean anything to her) and regularly terrified the whole family. Concetta concedes that He wasn't "demonstrably affectionate," but forgives all because Italians "make the most devoted parents and the most loyal of Americans." Next to Italians, Connie likes Jews best—not least for their "delicious Jewish pickles."

The first half of the book traces Connie's burgeoning career as a child singer and accordionist, her budding vanity and sexuality and her recognition that "God's a woman, all right!" Her language is that of the people (especially the people in *People*). She says "yup," addresses the reader as "gang," translates foreign words ("escargots [snails]"), explains that WASPs are "all those who don't remember where they came from" and credits many of her jokes to her favorite comedians. But she doesn't need professional help. Her ear is flawless: "Go know, right? What a dope *I* was!" or "I nearly barfed" or "The man must have been mentally arthritic!" The scenes with Bobby Darin ("What a truly offensive person!") are especially winning: "Bobby's encounters with other women didn't faze me at all. After all, he didn't want pimples." Yet there is a dark undercurrent throughout her narrative. She knows who murdered her aunt but won't say (she won't say why she won't say); she employs brutalizing metaphors, such as "my not-so-petite body needed something that bloomed out at the thighs like Bangladesh needs Diet Delite," and Daddy was from "the Richard Speck School of Charm"; she takes pleasure in avenging the evils done her by such villains as a third-grade teacher who criticized her singing.

Then, just when you begin to fear that she'll never grow up, the narrative takes an astonishing leap forward, from 1960 to 1974. The effect is not unlike E.M. Forster's "Gerald died that afternoon." We learn in a two-page summary that she's been married three times, suffered a miscarriage, made millions and stopped singing. In other

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words, after plodding through nearly 250 pages of home life in Jersey, she skips all the good stuff. The rest of the book, which employs more flashbacks and flashforwards than *Pale Fire*, *Lolita* and *Ada* combined, is a litany of humiliations, including rape and the murder of her brother. She offers nothing new about the latter (as we noted, she does not see autobiography as a form for revealing pertinent information), but her account of the rape, which took place in a Howard Johnson's immediately after her performance at the Westbury Music Fair, is harrowing. It's told as a trialogue among the rapist ("Ever f____ a black man before?"), the unspoken thoughts of the furious victim ("Twice a day, you filthy bastard!"), and her actual responses ("No, uh-uh, I haven't"). In the end, Connie recovers her voice and career, adopts a child and thanks her fans.

If the horrors that plague Connie contribute to her strength of character, the travails of Little Richard, a genuinely great performer whose life is Byzantine in its complexity, are reduced to a shaggy-dog story by the putative and ubiquitous author, White, who believes everything Richard tells him about his descent into rock-and-roll and his ascent into the clergy. Left to himself, White is at a loss about music and the English language. Here Nabokov goes too far. It may be cricket to attribute to a rock critic the idea that "Little Richard *is* America," but it simply isn't believable to have him worship a pantheon of "legends" that includes Tom Jones or to have him say that an abruptly concluded concert is like "getting your throat cut at the very finest moment of orgasmic delight." The oral testimony that accounts for most of the book is logy and repetitive, and the attempts at linguistic precision are often flat, as when Richard is shown pronouncing multisyllabic words perfectly, though he's incapable of saying "because" ("cos" is the best he can do). There is a story lurking in this volume, full of homosexual and heterosexual horrors, but the protagonist is primarily interested in listing every famous rock star who ever stole his thunder or said something nice about him. White seems to think that the best one can say of Richard is that he inspired people like David Bowie. The inclusion of a discography, however, is a nice touch.

Sinatra is mostly pictures, and the discography is useless. Richard Peters's

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SYNTHESIS PUBLICATIONS

The Frank Sinatra Scrapbook is a more informed and entertaining companion, but entertainment is not the point here. Had Nabokov lived to finish it, *Sinatra* might have been mercilessly funny. The rebirth of Charles Kinbote as John Rockwell certainly boded well—the name recalls Nabokov's other Johns, Ray and Shade, conjures up the embodiment of a critic who wants all musicians to rock well and even brings to mind an actual critic at *The New York Times* known for his inability to tell a good Sinatra performance from a bad one. The problem, to paraphrase Dryden, is that he "never deviates into sense." Consider the opening paragraphs. When the critic calls Sinatra "by any reasonable criterion the greatest singer in the history of American popular music," the mood of paranoia is handsomely established in a manner familiar to readers of *Pale Fire*. Similarly, we recognize the kind of intellectual who refuses to distinguish between a man's artistic triumphs and personal outrages. But then the prose dissipates into contradiction and incoherence, as when he complains that "everyone" subverts the singer's accomplishments by concentrating on his "tackier aspects," and three sentences later recognizes as a "cliché of Sinatra biography" that "his music ultimately excuses his life." The characterization of Sid Vicious's "My Way" as a tribute to Sinatra is amusing enough, but the many errors in fact and conception are wearying. Solipsism runs wild; he thinks Tin Pan Alley songs appealed "primarily to a white, urban, middle-class audience," that Fabian Forte is one of many Italian-Americans who "had a disproportionate impact on popular singing," that Sinatra didn't "come to terms" with jazz until the 1960s, that circular breathing (which Harry Carney introduced to jazz fifty years ago) first became "fashionable" in jazz with the avant-garde, that Eddie Fisher emulated "black soul shouting," and on and on.

Rockwell finds Sinatra's "enemies" lurking everywhere, not least in the dark night of jazz. He confesses to "my own feelings of generational hostility to finger-snapping, too-cool-for-words jazzish hipsters," and praises Sinatra for "offering jazzish drive without untoward brassy vulgarity." His patrician ambivalence about anything "jazzish," a term he apparently associates with 1950s beatniks (hence the "generational hostility"), leads him to proclaim Si-

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natra's allegiance to bel canto while ignoring the more profound influences that distinguish him from, say, Fabian Forte or Luciano Pavarotti. But whereas Kinbote/Rockwell tortured the actual text of John Shade's poem to meet his own egocentric needs, Rockwell/Kinbote's obvious unfamiliarity with much of Sinatra's work—few performances are mentioned, let alone analyzed—leaves a gaping wound at the heart of his argument. This time Nabokov sharpened his sword to skewer not the exegete so much as the hack. *Sinatra* is precisely the right ending for a trilogy in which critical doublethink overwhelms poetic sentiment, but the prose is too leaden to be much fun. It could use some of Connie Francis's sparkling wit. □

The 'Super Savers'

CATHARINE R. STIMPSON

REDEMPTORAMA: Culture, Politics, and the New Evangelicalism. *By Carol Flake. Anchor Press/Doubleday. 300 pp. $15.95.*

One Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1970, a few people who had dropped in on Ronald and Nancy Reagan, then the First Couple of California, bid farewell by clasping hands for a round of prayer. For a moment, George Otis, a California businessman, spoke in his own voice. Then his hand, the one holding Reagan's, began to shake. Immediately, he knew the meaning of his palsied flaps: the Holy Spirit had descended on him.

His voice changed. Addressing Reagan as "my Son," the voice assured the Governor that he had been "pleasing." If "Son" would "walk uprightly before Me," Son would "reside at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue," the home of the First Couple of the Land.

For some, Otis's elevation to the role of medium for the Holy Spirit remains a cheerful prophecy of the Presidential election a decade later. For others, Otis is an example, far less cheering than that of lottery winners, of a man whose wish came true. But the fact that anybody—other than family, friends, customers or a random pollster—should want to interpret George Otis at all shows how much public attention religion has reclaimed. Carol Flake's *Redemptorama* is a smart, sharp, tartly engineered projectile that zips toward its target: the latest version of a Great Awakening, attempting to bestow on this country the status of a most-favored nation in a treaty with the Christian God. Drawing strength from the alliance of conservative institutions, patriarchal ideologies, state power and corporate ambitions that is as booming as bass drums in a homecoming parade, the Awakening is well under way.

According to Flake, the first signs of a religious revival became apparent in the 1970s. Jimmy Carter, though he proved to be a "liberal in sheepish clothing," was a born-again Christian. In 1977, Anita Bryant told gays to go and sin no morrah. In 1979, the year in which Pope John Paul II brought his roadshow to the United States, a small group chartered the Moral Majority. Although *Redemptorama* summarizes history hastily and theology tersely, it correctly identifies those events as the most recent incarnations of struggles as old as the European presence on the North American continent: the struggles between theocratic and democratic impulses; between "Christ and culture" (a phrase Flake adopts from H. Richard Niebuhr); between the Scriptures and our secular texts. Not coincidentally, *The Fundamentals*, the series of booklets that chiseled out such essential principles of fundamentalist Christianity as biblical inerrancy, appeared in the same decade that produced the Armory Show, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *Tender Buttons* and that skeptical, luscious meditation on paganism, Christ and death, Wallace Stevens's "Sunday Morning."

Yet my metaphor—*Redemptorama* as weapon—is only partly accurate. Carol Flake can be explosively tough-minded about the powerful and the ambitious, about the jowly patriarchs in vested suits who go to prayer breakfasts with Ronald Reagan. And like many who have defrocked organized religion, from Voltaire to the scriptwriters of *Ghostbusters*, she knows that satire can

Catharine R. Stimpson, professor of English at Rutgers University, is working on a book about Gertrude Stein and concepts of cultural change.

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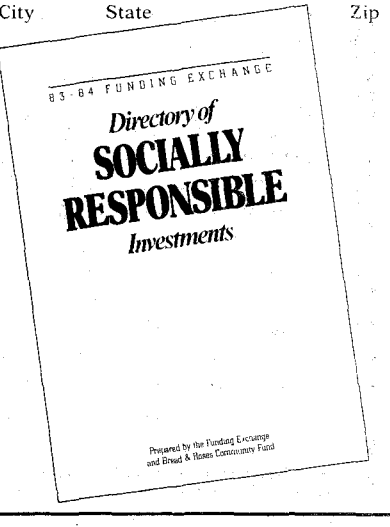

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corrode more effectively than philippics. She is, however, gentle with ordinary people. She praises the kindliness and generosity of many who seek not the heights of the electronic pulpit but the hardness of the church bench. She prefers Christ's more humble followers to his moguls. She also admires much of the work of radical theologians. With roots in nineteenth-century Christian socialism and Christian reform movements, they toil for peace and social justice.

Flake's past has prepared her for these deft negotiations between irony and sympathy, for she was raised in Texas as a Southern Baptist. Brother Johnny was her fire-and-brimstone preacher. The public schools first connected her little evangelical Christian community to the larger world, with its "more complex, contradictory values." Acutely sensitive to the importance of public education, she fears the double strategy of separatism and censorship that might weaken it.

Flake went on to college and graduate school. There she and her colleagues dreamed up "Redemptorama," an imaginary theme park that presented the Bible in "Cecil B. De Mille fashion," with redemption transmogrified into a roller-coaster ride. She traveled from such blasphemies to the secularism of the Northeast. As science once flattered itself for scouring out superstition, so Flake believed she had "outgrown" her faith. Still, no process, no matter how mind-altering, erases every bit of the past. In 1979, religion again drew her in. She undertook a "pilgrimage" through the world of evangelicalism. At the end, she found her religious faith renewed.

In *Visions of Glory*, a confessional history of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Barbara Grizzuti Harrison revealed far more than Flake does about the psychology of her belief—that potent fusion of personal fantasy and moral principle. Nevertheless, Flake is as shrewd and as vivid an anthropologist. Because she is both insider and outsider, because she is both immersed in religious experience and dry-eyed, this "ambivalent émigré," as she calls herself, avoids the liberal error of regarding evangelicals in the manner of an explorer "peering through the foliage at a stone-wielding prehistoric tribe."

The evangelicals and fundamentalists (more rigorous than evangelicals) she describes have emerged from the threading of the Sun Belt through the loops that once held the Bible Belt. Churches are warmer and more comfortable, politics more sophisticated; the absolute commitment to the word has dissolved into a manipulation of the image. Indeed, Super Sanctuaries can have Total Image Centers as well as Bible classes and Nautilus machines.

Redemptorama offers a vigorous set of field studies in New Evangelical theories of sex and marriage, sports, music, publishing, media (including Christian soap operas) and social values, and in the movement's cunning congregations with the New Right. Flake writes convincingly of the New Evangelical culture of business. In *The Armies of the Night*, Norman Mailer sketched a schizophrenic split between devout Christianity and the American corporation, "an unseen vise whose pressure could split . . . mind from . . . soul." However, part of the appeal of contemporary evangelicalism is that it seems to offer an ideological lubricant to help people slide out of Mailer's vise; to reconcile Christ, capital and marching on the Capitol. A "Super Saver" can be both a potent preacher and a high-yield certificate of deposit.

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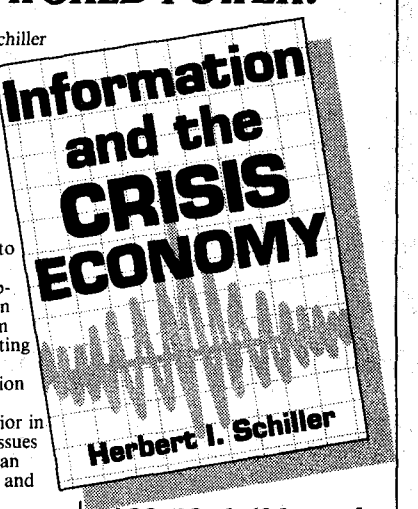

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Flake might have speculated more about the effect of this Christian capitalism on the worshipers, who are mostly from the lower middle class. Perhaps 45 percent of all evangelicals in the labor force are manual workers, and less than 20 percent are professionals or entrepreneurs. Will a call to Christian capitalism prove inspiring or will it ultimately provoke a populism of disappointment?

The New Evangelicalism may just be the rough beast slouching toward Bethlehem to be born. (History's zany joke is that the beast is clean-cut and prefers air-conditioned buildings to hot desert air.) It summons up memories of the terrible dangers of organized religion: the devaluation of women, the monolithic thinking that denies the dappled diversity of the world and rumbles toward totalitarianism, the conviction that one religious text is the single manifesto that will spur us toward our manifest destiny. Thomas Jefferson, in *Notes on Virginia*, had good reason to claim that it does us no injury if our neighbor says there are twenty gods or none.

However, Flake has written *Redemptorama* in the past tense, as if her subject were already a part of history. This grammatical nicety signifies her belief that the New Evangelicals—despite their numbers, money, pacts and PACs—will not get all they want. Tensions within Christianity and between Christians and non-Christians will hamper them. Inevitably, the New Evangelicals will move toward the confusing, often uncertain moderate center of American life. Although they woo that center, they will be unable to win it. Moreover, the evangelical use of electronic media may prove to be little more than a spiritual vibrator: a stimulus whose mechanisms, apparently so gratifying, will eventually demonstrate the inability of the mechanical to serve human needs. Of TV savior Pat Robertson, Flake remarks:

> Robertson knew the loneliness, the despair, the anguish of the wounded or lost sinners of America. . . . His show offered the electronic version of group prayer. . . . Unfortunately . . . he could offer only an illusion of . . . spontaneity and sense of community. . . . For the televangelist, communications from God had to come on cue.

Flake joins, then, a special contemporary group. Raised as evangelicals or as fundamentalists, they left the immediate circle of the church to join the modern United States. Less damaged, less tormented than Rayber in *The Violent Bear It Away*, Flannery O'Connor's novel about wrathful Christianity, they never wholly repressed their past. As the New Evangelicals emerged these people began to examine what once might have seemed a rear-guard cluster. Although aware of the value of a craving for the divine, although aware of the valors of Protestantism, many of them predict the self-destruction of the New Evangelicalism.

For Harvey Cox, the supple and imaginative theologian, its values may prove too rigidly redneck; its apocalyptic beliefs, too fatalistic. Like Flake, he believes that the New Evangelical "romance" with the electronic media will blank out genuine spiritual experience. If Cox ignores some of the wilder forms of contemporary religion, he nevertheless journeys along the margins of Christianity to construct a renewed belief system that might escape New Evangelical errors.

Carol Virginia Pohli, another such observer, feels that evangelical Christianity may undercut efforts to consoli-

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date its political influence, for the evangelical view of history is "elitist, teleological and separatist," not given to the bunting of conventions and the banners of parties. The traditional autonomy of local churches and denominations will resist pressures to act in concert, no matter the immense mailing lists in Richard Viguerie's office. Then, too, the "latent discontent" of some women may weaken evangelical authoritarianism.

Perhaps such prophecies are cool variations on post- rather than pre-millennial thinking. They promise that history is moving toward the light, not toward eschatological chaos. No matter how consoling, even how Whiggish, this expectation, it can hardly substitute for struggle against the aggressive clamor for power by those who would unite patriarchal church militant, patriarchal state militant and profit-sheet militant, and who would then flag down creepy secular humanists—even such agnostic secular humanists as me.

The virtues that modernity has bred—like Jefferson's "wall" between church and state—may crumble in this clamor. Where, too, will the Christ of grace and love be? Or the Christ of sheer common sense, who told the Pharisees to remember the difference between God and Caesar, between church and state? □

The Human Dimension

BRUCE BAWER

LIVES OF THE POETS: Six Stories and a Novella. *By E.L. Doctorow. Random House. 145 pp. $14.95.*

In the introduction to his only play, *Drinks Before Dinner*, E.L. Doctorow says he's tired of what he calls "the theatre of pathos." By that, he means plays in which

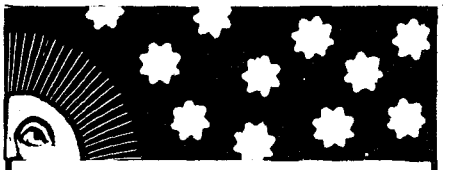
> a story is told about this man or that woman to reveal how sad his or her life is, or how triumphant, or how he or she does not realize fulfillment as a human being, or does realize it, or is trapped in his or her own illusions, or is liberated from them, or fails to learn to communicate love, or learns, or is morally defeated by ethnic or economic circumstances, or is not defeated.

If you think that list covers just about everything from *Oedipus Rex* to *Hurlyburly*, you're right. Doctorow doesn't care much for any play that takes the emotional life of human beings too seriously. He's proud to say that *his* characters "have no domestic biographies to offer, no childhoods to remember, no religion, no regional identification." As little human dimension, in short, as possible.

What they do have is ideas. Doctorow loves ideas. He favors plays "in which the holding of ideas or the arguing of ideas is a matter of life and death, and characters take the ideas they hold as seriously as survival." The main idea in *Drinks Before Dinner*, as postulated by one Edgar (the author's mouthpiece), is that thanks to TV and the Bomb, we've all "dispose[d] of our humanity." "I am no longer distinguishable from anyone else," complains Edgar, "nor is anyone distinguishable from me. . . . We could all be each other." This, Doctorow means us to understand, is why he's not all that excited about writing plays that center on emotional conflicts: we nuclear-age Americans are automatons and cannot be expected to have any emotions, let alone emotional conflicts, worth writing about.

Doctorow's novels sell a similar bill of goods. The pre-World War I Americans in the pellucid, often powerfully written *Ragtime*, with their plain-wrap names ("Father," "Mother," "Younger Brother," etc.), and the Depression-era Americans in the often confusing and pseudosurrealistic 1980 novel *Loon Lake* (in which the histories of the major characters are presented as cut and dried *Who's Who* listings) are as free of human dimension as the contemporary dramatis personae in *Drinks Before Dinner*. Doctorow doesn't blame the truncation of these lives on TV and the Bomb, of course. On what, then? Partly on Freud, whose ideas, he says, "destroy[ed] sex in America," but even more, predictably enough, on a native son: Henry Ford, whose assembly line turned workmen into "nameless faceless" cogs (*Loon Lake*) and "interchangeable parts" (*Ragtime*). The characters in *The Book of Daniel* are somewhat rounder, but even they are defined almost exclusively in terms of their rela-

Bruce Bawer writes regularly for The New Criterion.



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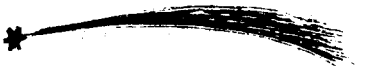

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tionship to the American system; as the book is supposed to be Daniel's doctoral dissertation, its form allows Doctorow to interpolate mini think-pieces on, among other things, Disneyland as the ultimate symbol of depersonalization in modern America.

What about Doctorow's first novel, *Welcome to Hard Times*? It's a Western, and therefore takes place pre-assembly line, but its characters—the settlers who help Blue, the Mayor of a Dakota Territory town named Hard Times, rebuild it after its destruction by the marauding Man from Bodie—are perhaps the dreariest and most dimensionless of all Doctorow's creations. Why are *they* like this? Doctorow apparently wants us to feel that it has something to do with their common dream: the American dream of taming a frontier, of working hard and reaping rewards. Near the end of the novel, when the local mine turns out to contain nothing but fool's gold, Blue observes that the worthless stone is "like the West, like my life: The color dazzles us, but when it's too late we see what a fraud it is, what a poor pinched-out claim." Soon afterward, when unemployment results in the final destruction of the town and the death of many of its residents, Blue comments, "If I hadn't believed, they'd be alive today." Believed, in other words, in the American dream.

That the American dream is a pretty bad deal for all concerned is, of course, a controlling idea in Doctorow's fiction. The dream is responsible for all of it: the mass-produced cars, the TV sets, the Bomb and even, in the end, the full-scale destruction of humanity. The dream, as Emma Goldman explains in *Ragtime*, causes the masses to "permit themselves to be exploited by the few" by "being persuaded to identify with them." As for the few, all the dream does for them is bury them alive in a depersonalized consumer Disneyland. (Not coincidentally, Doctorow has filled his novels with images of live burial: Houdini buries himself alive and J.P. Morgan sleeps in a pyramid in *Ragtime*; a mine disaster in *Loon Lake* buries workers under tons of rock; the Man from Bodie locks a man in a horse-drawn hearse.)

The dark side of the American dream is, needless to say, a familiar literary theme, and by no means an unworkable one. It served Fitzgerald well in *The Great Gatsby* and Dreiser in *An American Tragedy*. But it has yet to work for Doctorow. His approach is closer to Upton Sinclair's than to Fitzgerald's: rather than recognize that the novel's path to truth leads, of necessity, through the human soul, he peoples his novels with characters that are little more than hunks of plywood, each with its own sharply defined didactic function. There are victims of the system, such as Coalhouse Walker (the pianist whose car is trashed by firemen and whose fiancée, Sarah, is killed by a militiaman in *Ragtime*) and Susan Isaacson (whose parents are executed for treason in *The Book of Daniel*). America betrays these victims, takes the lives of their loved ones, drives them to madness, anarchy and violence. Walker commits murder; Susan, suicide.

Then there are the bourgeois apologists, people like Robert Lewin (who adopts Daniel and Susan in *The Book of Daniel*) and Father in *Ragtime*. They're aware of the system's injustices—against the Isaacsons and Walker, respectively—and even try to do something about them. Lewin "belongs to committees, and practices law for poor people . . . is big in the ACLU" and is "a demonstrator against Dow Chemical recruiters," and Father puts up bail for Walker. But it isn't enough for Doctorow, as he makes clear in the last sentence of the paragraph about Lewin: "When he has the time, he likes to read *The New Yorker*." To Doctorow, it's all clear-cut: Lewin and Father, for all their humanitarianism, are part of the system. They've bought the dream, and unlike Isaacson and Walker, they are not about to chuck it for a one-way trip to the barricades. Doctorow goes out of his way to make them look silly on this account: when Susan argues with Daniel about her involvement in a revolutionary movement, Lewin complains, "If you can't conduct a civil discussion I'd prefer no discussion at all"; when Father bails Walker out of jail, he's "put off because Coalhouse Walker was barely civil in his gratitude."

That there's so little room amid all the betrayal and injustice, the madness and violence, the noble anarchy and detestable civility, for a little individual human psychology makes following the fortunes of Doctorow's characters a frustrating experience. What is it, one cannot help but wonder, that makes Coalhouse Walker so intractable? What makes him, of all the black Americans ever harassed by racists, refuse to walk

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away from trouble? Why does the death of Sarah transform him into a twentieth-century Nat Turner? Doctorow throws a line in somewhere about "the violence underlying all principle," and we understand we are to recognize that Walker is a man of principle, who takes the ideas he holds—ideas about justice, dignity and vengeance—as seriously as survival. Fine. But how did he get that way? Doctorow gives us no clue. To him, Walker is merely a victim of the system.

The way Doctorow sees it, we're all victims. Sometimes it seems he reserves his pity for those who make it: Mindish, the Isaacsons' supposed Communist collaborator in *The Book of Daniel*, who spends his declining years in bourgeois Santa Barbara bliss; Tateh, the destitute socialist in *Ragtime* who strikes it rich in Hollywood and gives himself a title; Joe, the working-class drifter in *Loon Lake* who is adopted by a millionaire and rises through the ranks of the Central Intelligence Agency, eventually becoming an ambassador. Happy endings? Not at all. The way Doctorow sees it, America has played its dirtiest trick on such rags-to-riches figures. By making them well-to-do, it's robbed them of the integrity and independence of mind they derived from being down and out. Success has buried them alive.

And that, believe it or not, is the general idea at work in "Lives of the Poets," the "novella" in Doctorow's new book, *Lives of the Poets: Six Stories and a Novella*. Actually, it's not a novella at all; it's a sixty-page spiel by an unnamed speaker who, like Doctorow, is a successful 50ish liberal New York Jewish novelist. This unnamed novelist goes on about his mistress, his children, his broken marriage, his friends' marriages, his health and age, the erosion of America's moral values, the rise of ridiculous religions, the number of minorities in New York and his memories of Kenyon College (where Doctorow also went to school).

Above all, the unnamed novelist goes on about his "commitment." He's always been deeply committed, but it's not as easy as it used to be. His problem is this: he's a rich, famous writer, a friend of "Norman," a regular on the fashionable dinner-party circuit in Manhattan. He's *buried alive*, don't you see? He's oppressed by success. He's being killed with comfort. At a party at the Dakota apartment house,

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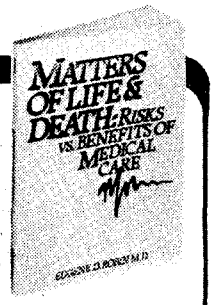

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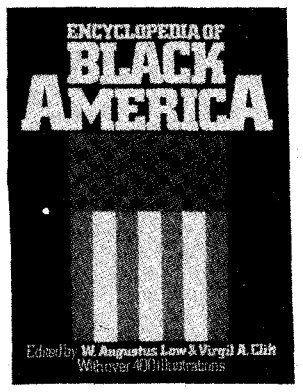

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he watches his writer friend ... some serious drinking because "He's quite brilliant and has never made a dime"; but our hero knows who's *really* suffering here: "Oh Leo, I think, when you make a little money from your work you'll see what trouble is." And he's serious.

But he hasn't given up. He has abandoned his wife, kids and suburban home to live in a Greenwich Village high-rise with his young mistress. Clearly, this is meant to be taken, at least in part, as a heroic act: the man's trying to climb out of that middle-class grave, to renew his "commitment." He's like Younger Brother in *Ragtime*, who leaves his white-bread family to put on blackface and join the Coalhouse Walker gang. And—what do you know?—the man pulls it off. At the end of the story, he overcomes his stasis, his love of bourgeois comfort, and takes a family of Central American refugees into his high-rise flat. But you don't believe it for a minute. For one thing, it's out of character. For another, our unnamed novelist's act of mercy is a tired conceit that Doctorow has overused. His Ins are always harboring Outs, thereby exposing themselves to a therapeutic measure of adversity and anarchy otherwise unavailable to them. In *Welcome to Hard Times*, Blue takes in Molly and Jimmy after the devastations wreaked by the Man from Bodie leave them homeless; in *The Book of Daniel*, the Lewins take in the Isaacson children; in *Ragtime*, Mother takes in Sarah and her baby; in *Loon Lake*, the millionaire F.W. Bennett takes in Joe. Thanks to its ending, "Lives of the Poets" manages to seem both aimless and contrived, a neat trick.

The same is true of other stories in *Lives of the Poets*. Most of them are about lonely, estranged or disturbed people who are the victims of nature (symbolized variously by snow, shadows, water), history and/or America. "The Writer in the Family," for instance, begins promisingly as a story about a New York City boy in 195... whose salesman father has died and who writes letters in his father's name to convince his grandmother that the family is alive and well in Arizona. "To the immigrant generation of my grandmother, Arizona was the American equivalent of the Alps, it was. . . . success." The premise is intriguing, and we expect the boy to grow in some way as a result of his letter writing; but what we

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get instead is yet another diatribe about dehumanization. The boy notices his father's collection of sea novels as if for the first time and realizes with a start that his father never aspired to spend his life buried alive in a deadly-dry place like Arizona—what he wanted was to escape, to go to sea. End of story.

"Willi" also has a boy hero. His mother and tutor have an affair; the boy tells his father; the father attacks the mother; the boy protects her: "I was enraged, I pushed her back and jumped at him, pummeling him, shouting that I would kill him." Doctorow sets this story in Galicia in 1910 so that his narrator can close by saying, "All of it was to be destroyed anyway, even without me." The story, you see, is really about betrayal, violence, World War I and, above all, the advent of the American century.

And so it goes. In *Lives of the Poets*, there are no lives and no poets, only a handful of familiar ideas. The styles are familiar too. In some of these fictions ("Lives of the Poets," "The Writer in the Family," "The Hunter") Doctorow spells things out in that scrupulously simple *Ragtime* prose; in others ("Willi," "The Water Works," "The Foreign Legation," "The Leather Man") he tries to be artsy and mysterious in the manner of *Loon Lake*. Play it one way or the other, the song is always the same. □

The Short Course

IRA BERLIN

SLAVERY AND HUMAN PROGRESS. *By David Brion Davis. Oxford University Press. 374 pp. $25.*

When Henry Ford said history is bunk, he had it backward. History, especially great history, is ebunking. It restores our ctive, perhaps even our y, and puts us on unning of history" rarely anticipate

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is un- that s the human viewed ies, ac- w, were nce where d led to and deg- aster alike. engines of very poisoned ess. is was an enor- ps, as Davis ar- st extraordinary in e rapid triumph of even more extraor- few decades, slavery condemned as a throw- gone age of barbarism, Christianity and an in- cle to virtue and human broad and universal was n slavery that within a cen- stitution that had stood un- since antiquity had been con- oblivion. Slavery fell in the mpire in 1833; the French and some 500 pages, picked up the story from there but carried it only fifty years further, to the 1820s, while narrowing the focus from Western culture in general to the Anglo-American world. Davis has a playful intellect. He likes to size up ideas, view them from several angles and spin out their implications—habits that make for splendid scholarship but not necessarily easy reading. Reviewers raved, but faced with ten pounds of closely argued text, all but the most committed readers reached for a good novel instead. Davis's prodigious scholarship was quickly becoming the most commonly cited but least read of all modern history. But now, before closing in on the final volume of his trilogy, to be titled *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, Davis has taken time out to deliver a more accessible view of his work.

Slavery and Human Progress is both ore and less than a summary of Davis's two volumes as well as a projection themes that will figure promi- the third. In some measure, it es many of the ideas from the : Davis's insistence that the nherent in the idea of the son and thing has been tern history; his no- stirrings of the anti- at marked a significant id history; and his linking irst assaults on slavery to the of industrial capitalism. In other ys, it anticipates themes Davis will doubtless develop more fully in the final volume—notably, the connection be-

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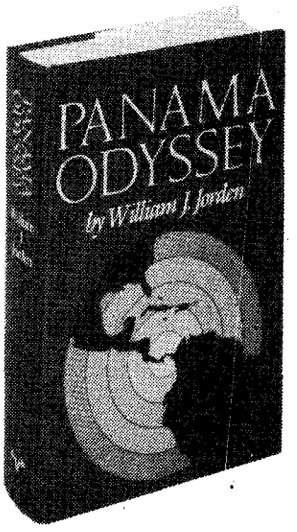

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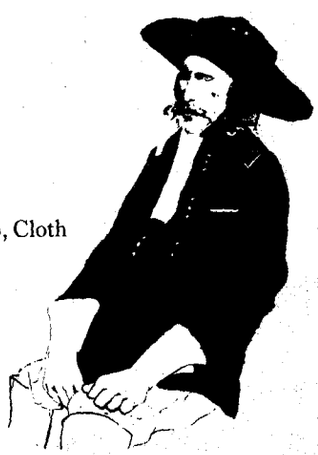

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tween abolition and imperialism.

But *Slavery and Human Progress* is no mere abridgment. It moves beyond the bounds of Western society to discuss the roles of Moslem and Hebraic cultures in the development of both slavery and antislavery. It also pushes the story into the twentieth century. Most important, the single interpretive volume liberates Davis from the demands of the trilogy and allows him to articulate and extend his major ideas without sacrificing their richness and subtlety.

Few ideas now receive more universal assent than the notion that slavery is wrong, that the attempted reduction of persons to property and the accompanying physical and psychological brutality constitute one of the great crimes of history. Nowhere is this more true than in the United States. Our language, our politics, our identity as a people revolve around the duality of freedom, good/slavery, bad.

In a cynical age, the idea of progress hardly carries the weight it once did. Yet whatever progress means (and Davis wisely admits that he is not sure) few today would defend slavery as a progressive institution or a source of human betterment. At best, some historians have suggested that slavery, however brutal, inefficient and wasteful, was a stage, perhaps even a necessary stage, in human development. Yet Davis maintains that through most of history, slavery was considered a progressive institution. Jewish, Moslem and Christian savants justified it as a means of bringing God and superior civilization to pagans and infidels. In the modern period, he finds that the spread of slavery from the Mediterranean to the New World was closely tied to the expansion of European trade, technology and religion:

> Plantation slavery, far from being an aberration invented by lawless buccaneers and lazy New World adventurers, as nineteenth-century liberals often charged, was a creation of the most progressive of peoples and forces in Europe—Italian merchants; Iberian explorers; Jewish inventors, traders and cartographers; Dutch, German, and British investors and bankers.

In short, by every standard—moral, political and technological—slavery was a progressive institution, advancing the tide of civilization.

Tracing the development of slavery through the Roman, Islamic and Iberian empires, Davis explores the firm link between slavery and progress. His long view helps explain the evolution of modern Afro-American slavery. For example, he argues that Moslems equated slavery with black skin, sin, danger and fears of The Other—an equation which later figured prominently in Western thought. He shows how Jewish ideas of servitude that derived from antiquity and from the Diaspora of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries helped push slavery across the Atlantic. Perhaps most important, he suggests the way in which the general crisis of Christianity that followed the Enlightenment fused evangelical Christianity and abolition.

In the modern period, Davis finds a remarkable coincidence between slavery and technological innovation, commercial expansion, cultural enlightenment and—above all—the spectacular accumulation of private wealth and power that accompanied the transfer of slavery from the Old World to the New. In the New World, the most productive and prosperous colonies rested on slave labor. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this connection was so obvious as to be commonplace. The majority of policy-makers and commentators regularly equated slavery with wealth and national greatness.

Toward the end of that century, t
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Danes declared for freedom in 1848, the Dutch, in 1862; the Russians liquidated serfdom in 1861; and the terrible swift sword of the American Civil War followed soon after. Mopping-up operations continue to the present day, but the battle had been won. Slaves and free people joined together to celebrate the Great Jubilee, permanently fusing the idea of free labor to the notion of mankind's progress.

It is not simply the destruction of slavery that concerns Davis but the consequences of its demise. Winning the war against slavery, abolitionists transformed freedom. In explicating the origins of this new dispensation, Davis goes over old ground. But his reweaving of the ideological threads—Enlightenment ideas, evangelical religion, revolutionary republicanism, Smithian economics—that connected abolition to the rise of the capitalist order gives those ideas greater clarity and power.

Everywhere emancipation did more than free the slaves. It endowed the emancipators—British at first, and then American—with extraordinary new authority. In *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Davis showed how that authority helped the emancipators rationalize the radically new exploitation that accompanied industrial capitalism. The same Parliament that freed slaves in the British West Indies enacted a poor law that incarcerated paupers at home, separating husbands and wives and assuring that both men and women would be forced into slave-like labor. In *Slavery and Human Progress*, Davis presses the connection between abolition and the expansion of capitalism still further. He delineates the way in which the moral authority gained from emancipation—the certainty that history was on their side—enabled and encouraged the British to carry the Union Jack to all corners of the globe.

Opposition to slavery not only provided a pretext for British intervention in the affairs of so-called backward and primitive peoples and allowed the installation of British commercial and political hegemony but also provided the basis of the British belief that they acted on behalf of humanity. Indeed, it was not long before the French, the Germans and even that archimperialist King Leopold had transformed the humanitarian banner into a lever to jimmy open Africa for the rankest economic exploitation. Dark-skinned people all over the world found that emancipators could be as coercive and oppressive as enslavers. Africa, as Davis notes, was not colonized and subjugated by enslavers but by liberators.

Emancipation thus became a form of enslavement, and the meaning of freedom became as elusive as the meaning of slavery. In reminding us of this, Davis performs the most important function of a historian. He tells us that things are not always what they seem.

But Davis's work also provides another lesson. Certainly few slaves—in any age—believed their condition to be evidence of human progress. Lest he be thought to view history from only one end of the lash, Davis is quick to interject that "the very idea of progress owes much to ancient bondspeople who made manumission or escape the universal symbols for deliverance, redemption, resurrection, and divine mission." This reminder is no codicil. Progress—like the relationship of freedom and slavery—had very different meanings to the slaves and enslavers. If Davis's largest argument warns of profound ambiguities and contradictions in the certitudes of another age, the slaves themselves provide another message—and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. □

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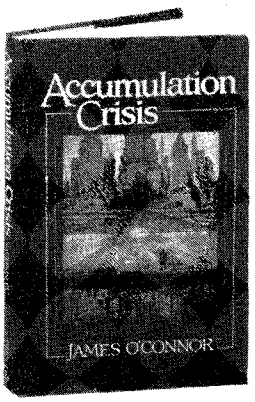

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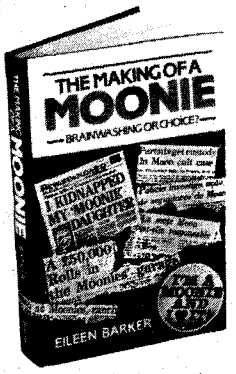

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Executive Sweets

ROBERT LEKACHMAN

MANAGING. *By Harold Geneen, with Alvin Moscow. Doubleday. 297 pp. $17.95.*

IACOCCA: An Autobiography. *By Lee Iacocca, with William Novak. Bantam. 352 pp. $17.95.*

Have you ever wondered why the Geneens and Iacoccas collect $800,000 or $900,000 in salary, profitable stock options and lavish retirement pensions, and enjoy into the bargain such pleasant perks as limousines, private airplanes and gourmet meals in executive dining rooms while you, in dispiriting contrast, earn a small fraction of their compensation and travel economy class on your vacations? Could it be that early in life you gave the wrong answer to Bernie Cornfeld's challenging question, Do you sincerely want to be rich?

Turn with me for guidance to the confessions and counsel of two eminent tycoons. In the eighteen years 1959 to 1977, during which Harold Geneen headed International Telephone and Telegraph, annual sales ballooned from $766 million to $16.7 billion. For fifty-eight successive quarters I.T.T. earnings increased, yielding annual growth rates of more than 10 percent. Geneen was the archetypal conglomerateur. Worried at the outset of his "reign" (his word) that 85 percent of I.T.T.'s activities were outside the United States, mostly in Europe, and were concentrated in telephone systems, he set out to diversify and to bring the American share of sales and profits to 50 percent. Before he was finished, Geneen had, in the words of his admiring collaborator, "bought, merged with, or absorbed some 350 different businesses in eighty countries, and fashioned them into 250 different profit centers." At one time or another while he was president, I.T.T. baked bread, sold insurance, trained secretaries, built houses, rented cars, made small loans to consumers and patriotically assisted the Central Intelligence Agency in the destabilization of the Allende regime in Chile. At its peak, I.T.T. ranked number nine on *Fortune*'s list of 500 industrials.

How did a poor boy who got his accounting degree in night school scramble to the topmost branch on the tallest tree in the corporate forest? You might find the answer disappointing. Bromides helped. Here is a garland of the maxims that guided Geneen: "Management must manage"; "Leadership cannot really be taught. It can only be learned"; "You can know a person by the kind of desk he keeps"; "You cannot run a business, or anything else, on a theory"; "In the business world, everyone is paid in two coins: cash and experience. Take the experience first; the cash will come later"; and finally, "The drudgery of the numbers will make you free."

Ah, numbers and facts. Like Gradgrind and Sergeant Friday, Geneen holds to the faith that "there is no word in the English language that more strongly conveys the intent of incontrovertibility, i.e., 'final and reliable reality,' than the word 'fact.'" Geneen was famous for meeting his top managers one week a month for sessions, he recalls happily, that often convened at 10 A.M. and could terminate at midnight or thereafter. When, late in one of these marathons, Geneen asked what a successful I.T.T. executive's most important quality was, a voice in his captive audience was heard to reply, "Insomnia."

Although Geneen tells the story, he doesn't sympathize with his subordinate's attitude: "I often told colleagues that business was as much fun as golf, tennis, sailing, dancing, or almost anything else you might want to name. . . . Business could be a great adventure, a lot of fun, something to look forward to every day." The best part of our hero's day began at 5 P.M., when silence descended on the executive suite and he could settle down to six or seven hours of uninterrupted report reading and number analysis. There is a Mrs. Geneen, but only as an offstage presence who is informed that once again her spouse will not be home for dinner. Harold does play golf and tennis, but he consoles himself that he can pick up useful business information along the way. Although he or his collaborator from time to time recall that an occasional woman joins the executive fraternity, the tone is almost relentlessly

Robert Lekachman, the author of Greed Is Not Enough: Reaganomics *(Pantheon), teaches at Lehman College, City University of New York.*

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masculine. Business is a man's game.

As Geneen concedes, his style of managing and acquiring by the numbers sometimes falters, but he draws no large inferences from his 1968 Rayonier fiasco. After the most careful analysis, Geneen authorized construction of a $120 million processing plant to convert wood into cellulose on the edge of a Canadian forest. Although "Rayonier's plans were checked and rechecked," no one had actually looked at the trees. They were too small, alas, to pay for transporting and processing. Loss to I.T.T., Rayonier's parent: $320 million. How many similar surprises I.T.T. encountered, Geneen does not say.

These days I.T.T. is just another conglomerate. Its earnings are not exceptional. It has spun off many of Geneen's acquisitions. Even in his glory days, critics suspected the veteran accountant of manipulating his beloved numbers to generate his string of ever higher profits. His is a story singularly empty of any achievement other than endless effort to make a large corporation even larger and its authoritarian master still richer. Geneen on the record doesn't much care what he makes or sells so long as target rates of return are met or exceeded. The best reason for acquiring Continental Baking was its highly profitable junk food, Twinkies. Geneen refused to gamble on computers because they were too risky to suit his taste. No yearning for technological breakthrough, no aspiration to improve the American diet or environment diverted Geneen from his pursuit of higher profits. This is a sad book.

Lee Iacocca has become so famous, most of all through his TV commercials for Chrysler, that earlier this year he had the gratifying opportunity to deny that he was considered for the Democratic Vice-Presidential nomination. As he says, when he was a rich Ford auto executive he was a Republican. In the course of rescuing Chrysler with Carter Administration loan guarantees, he became a Democrat. Moral: Put your political bets on the folks who help you. Certainly as autobiographies by celebrities go, this is an unusually candid book. By his own account, Iacocca propelled himself upward in the Ford Motor Company, where he worked for thirty-two years, by hard work à la Geneen but also by brashness and utter confidence in his own judgment. Unlike Geneen, who only went for the sure things, Iacocca staked his future at Ford and some hundreds of millions of corporate dollars on the youth-oriented Mustang. At Chrysler he bet the corporation on the success of a new line of front-wheel-drive K-cars. Geneen notwithstanding, Iacocca is proof that a person of pronounced entrepreneurial temperament can cut through corporate bureaucracies to make quick and risky decisions.

The most fascinating pages recall Iacocca's rise and fall at Ford. Henry Ford 2d treated his Lee as a protégé, a tyrant's pet, until he became jealous of his favorite's success and the increasing attention paid him by the media. Ford brooked no rivals. Moreover, he was a mean drunk who in one evening might imbibe three bottles of Lafite Rothschild at $120 a bottle. Oh, to be rich! In the rages that accompanied those bouts, Ford was a man to be avoided. By 1975, he had turned against his pushy subordinate enough to order a complete audit of Iacocca's expense account and personal finances. Although nothing damaging was discovered, Ford was not appeased. In 1978 he abruptly fired the man, whom, as he subsequently explained, he had never liked.

Iacocca was devastated and infuriated, although not angry enough to accept a telephone invitation to sponsor punishment, presumably by the mafia, of the man who had attacked his family honor. All he had to do was call a certain number and Ford's arms and legs would have been expeditiously broken. Why did he endure years of Ford's caprice and persecution, as well as signs of his master's anti-Italian and antiblack prejudices? His answer is honest:

> I was . . . greedy. I enjoyed being president. I liked having the president's perks, the special parking place, the private bathroom, the white-coated waiters. . . . And I found it almost impossible to walk away from an annual income of $970,000.

Could you or I?

Iacocca did not brood long. Two weeks after his confrontation with Ford, Chrysler sought his services as a potential savior. He took over as president with the understanding that he would become chief executive officer within a year. He discovered a mess. Information was unavailable. The corporation operated as a collection of independent duchies. The manufacturing people set production quotas without consulting their marketing colleagues. Cars rusted in Chrysler lots. Research and development were starved. In his first three years at the helm, Iacocca fired thirty-two of Chrysler's thirty-five vice presidents, nearly one a month. Hit hardest of the Big Three by the 1979 OPEC oil shock, Chysler would go broke without Federal aid, Iacocca soon realized. He tells well the tale of his incessant Washington lobbying. He is still angry at Walter Wriston, *The Wall Street Journal* and other opponents of Federal assistance. He notes with relish that sanctimonious bankers who cried free enterprise forever now quietly accept bailouts from the Federal Reserve and the F.D.I.C. He takes understandable pride in Chrysler's financial health and in its ability to repay Federal loans years ahead of schedule.

He has reflected on his experience at Chrysler and reached the conclusion that the corporate leaders' blind animus against government is foolish. To meet the Japanese challenge, he now says, the United States needs some sort of industrial policy. He scatters opinions everywhere. Air bags are a Naderite obsession, expensive and unreliable. The "national leadership consists of too many lawyers and not enough people from business. I'd like to see a system where we brought in twenty top managers to run the business side of the country and maybe even paid them $1 million a year, tax-free." His experience with United Automobile Workers president Douglas Fraser as a member of Chrysler's board of directors convinced him that it is useful to enlist the services of an occasional labor leader. He and Fraser got the U.A.W. to see reason on wage concessions in 1980. And he continues to believe, even though he again heads a rich corporation, that the Democrats will do better by both people and corporations than the Republicans.

Iacocca is one of those rare adults who is capable of changing his mind. This is not to say he has become a bleeding heart liberal. He does not, for example, advocate comprehensive health protection as the solution to the rising cost of employee medical benefits. Unlike his onetime Ford boss Robert McNamara, he is perfectly happy to produce cars that please hot rodders and yuppies. McNamara, a square type, favored functional vehicles devoid of romance. Iacocca is abrasive, impatient and demanding. But the juices of humanity course through his veins. He

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celebrates his parents, his wife and his two daughters as unashamedly as does Mario Cuomo.

As a guide to success, he is little more help than Geneen. The two agree on the merits of hard work and careful homework. Iacocca also believes in innovation, research and development and risk taking, as Geneen does not. In the end, luck and personality probably make the difference between success and failure. An evening with Iacocca might be entertaining. Only a masochist would willingly spend time with Geneen, at least without a substantial fee.

If, by the way, you have been wondering about Geneen's desk test for executives, wonder no more. Geneen distrusts clean-desk types. They have delegated all their work to someone else and don't understand what is going on around them. Go for the man with the messy desk. □

Unexpected Alice

MARTHA SAXTON

ALICE HAMILTON: A Life in Letters. *By Barbara Sicherman. Harvard University Press. 460 pp. $25.*

Alice Hamilton, who died in 1970 at the age of 101, was a doctor and a pioneer in the field of industrial medicine, the first woman appointed to teach at Harvard, a longtime resident and participant in the reform activities of Hull House and a committed political activist. She exposed the dangers of various manufactured substances and worked tirelessly for improved health among factory workers. In spite of her distinguished career, she has been less well known than her sister, Edith, the classical scholar.

In this volume, Barbara Sicherman presents an assortment of letters she considers representative of Hamilton's intellectual, political and personal life and connects them with informative essays which provide the reader with the appropriate historical and social context. The letters are, like their author, observant, thorough and thoughtful, and they provide an excellent introduction to her public life. Sicherman contends that they also elucidate the personal side of Hamilton's life, but here the material is more elusive and leaves its author as much a mystery to us as she seems to have been to herself. Sicherman's comments are sensitive and enlightening, but having decided against a full-scale biography she couldn't pursue several questions and themes which emerge from the life of this fascinating and complex woman.

Since this is a book about a woman of remarkable achievements, one must ask some of the obvious questions as to what in her socialization enabled her to develop her talents. What, for instance, prompted Hamilton to dismiss the possibility of marriage and children? How did she chart her career? And how did she expand her narrowly moralistic upbringing into the broad social vision that ultimately inspired her?

As far back as her boarding-school days, Hamilton's friends noted her aversion to marriage. She habitually made self-deprecating remarks about her appearance and would invariably single out the ugliest girl to sit with at dances, thus insuring that she, too, would be a wallflower. While entertaining a potential suitor she wrote how difficult it was to amuse him and how, in his company, she lost the freedom to enjoy herself: "Don't you know the feeling that you must not sit down for a half hour with a novel . . . you must devise some way to spend the evening, you must have pleasant conversation at the table." When she took a walk with him all she could think about were the sort of sarcastic remarks that she would have made upon seeing such a couple. At the University of Michigan, where she studied medicine, she was puzzled and somewhat annoyed to find that most young women looked to men for fun. "About the lovely times that girls have just among themselves, they know nothing."

Hamilton's relationship with her cousin Allen Williams reveals much about her feelings toward marriage, men and motherhood. In the mid-1890s she was working at the New England Hospital in Boston. Williams, who was also pursuing his medical studies, persistently tried to resume their childhood in-

Martha Saxton is the author of Louisa May: A Modern Biography of Louisa May Alcott *(Houghton Mifflin).*

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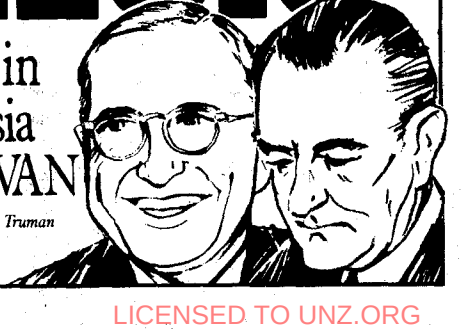

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timacy. But Hamilton could not believe he was sincere and felt that she couldn't speak freely with him, as she imagined he was always judging her and finding her "cruel, unjust, hard and wrong." Since there is no evidence that Williams harbored such thoughts, it seems clear that his affection had stirred up Hamilton's distaste for men. When Williams unexpectedly announced that he was marrying a medical student, Hamilton set down several thoughts illuminating her unhappy assessment of men. At first she expressed amazement at the notion that Williams was capable of love. She had always imagined him marrying "somebody who loved him tremendously and whom he liked in a cool sort of way." As to his proposed wife's studying medicine, she thought it "nonsense." She disapproved of married women getting professional training, announcing that "the proper state of society is one in which a woman is free to choose between an independent life of celibacy or a life given up to childbearing and rearing the coming generation. We will go down the path of degeneration if we lose our mothers and our home-life." This outburst seems strange from a woman who frequently commented on how difficult and compromising family life was to women's health and happiness, until one realizes that her decision to become a doctor was designed to close forever the question of her marrying.

One must look to Hamilton's childhood to explain the strength of her conviction on this matter. She and her extended family were the aristocracy of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Her parents, Montgomery and Gertrude Hamilton, oversaw the rigorous academic and moral education of their five children. The family, isolated by culture, money and sensibility, became an inward-looking, self-sufficient unit, but the parents' marriage was not, apparently, a prepossessing one. Montgomery was difficult and eventually became an alcoholic. His drinking must have had painful effects on this oversensitive, tightly knit group. It seems likely that Gertrude described to her daughters only the worst aspects of her marriage. One can deduce that there must have been positive aspects, since she steadfastly refused to divorce Montgomery and astonished her children in her final illness by telling them how much comfort her husband's presence and assurances had given her. In any case, the family dynamics—along with the tension be-

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tween the girls' extraordinary education and the extreme moral demands placed upon them as females—evidently convinced all four that they could either become wives or people. Their younger brother was the only Hamilton to marry.

On reading the letters one is struck by the rare intensity of moral purpose in Alice Hamilton's life. Her goal was always service, but it took her some time to settle on which service and for whom. Throughout her life she was called upon to perform the caretaking role that society expects from women. She nursed her sisters through illnesses and was to be found when needed at the bedside of her colleague and friend Jane Addams. She helped her younger sister Norah recover from a nervous breakdown. These were difficult periods for her. She later believed that something about the manner of her care had alienated Norah. She hesitated before tending to Addams. When her sister Margaret expressed misgivings about the home Hamilton had bought for them in Connecticut, she wrote saying that the one thing she could not bear was having Margaret worry about the house. "I got it for you and it simply must make you happy or I shall not know what to do." The remark reveals much about the helplessness and irritation Hamilton seemed to feel when confronted with the needs of others. Her medical experience filled her with frustration, a consequence of the disgust and inadequacy she felt when assisting at childbirth or caring for the sick. Over the years she began to see that closeness troubled her, not service. Once she invented a system for coping with excessive family intimacy, whereby people would eat breakfast alone, "their lunch perhaps with the family, and for dinner they should always have some outsiders so that family subjects cannot be discussed."

By 1919, when she was appointed to the faculty of Harvard, she felt that her life had become settled. She had resolved many of the conflicts that disturbed her earlier years. By moving from clinical medicine to research, she combined her drive to be useful with her need for distance. By becoming an investigator of factories, she put her family training in diplomacy to use. All the years spent working out her career and her need for independence contributed to the remarkable openmindedness which gave her life such scope. Her travels, her experience with people from different classes and her research taught her not to judge people too narrowly. She once said of Carrie Chapman Att that she wasn't "a big woman, none of the absolute suffragists are"; the same could not be said of her.

Arguably her greatest triumph was this breadth of vision which prevented her from getting deeply involved in the limited, moralistic issues of her generation such as temperance and social purity. Instead she concentrated on the wider causes of pacifism and freedom of speech. Feminist issues interested her, but she subjected them to her own thoughtful standards. She opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, for example, on the ground that it threatened protective legislation for working women. In the 1950s she retracted her opposition, having decided with characteristic fairness that her objection no longer held up.

Surprisingly, this openmindedness and ability to rethink her positions operated even on a personal level, enabling her in her later years to establish two very important friendships with men. For years she corresponded with Felix Frankfurter, often chiding him on the ethical failings of some of his decisions. And in her 80s, she became close to former president of the New York Bar Association Charles C. Burlingham, a dedicated reformer and a man of extraordinary intelligence. When he died, Hamilton wrote that it was "curious" how much she missed him, evidently marveling at the affection a man had elicited from her.

To the end of her life, Alice Hamilton remained a product of her beginnings—she demanded a great deal of herself and of others and was fiercely self-deprecatory. A scant three days after Christmas in 1961 she wrote apologizing to a friend for being so late in thanking her for a gift. Kennedy's inauguration speech she found "excellent" but his wife's hat and hairdo were "deplorable." When Connecticut College for Women wrote for permission to put her name and Edith's on a new dormitory, Hamilton replied that the idea was fine but stipulated that her name follow her sister's. She explained that while her own work was already out of date, Greece and Rome were timeless, and also that Edith was the older sister and "her name belongs in the first place." That firm step to the side was the last measure in the dance of deference which

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her parents and society had begun teaching her ninety-one years before. One must be both grateful and admiring that Alice Hamilton never allowed her feminine training to disfigure her intellect or constrict her goals. □

The Home Front

D.D. GUTTENPLAN

THE GOOD NEWS IS THE BAD NEWS IS WRONG. *By Ben J. Wattenberg. Simon & Schuster. 431 pp. $17.95.* Figures may not lie, but Ben Wattenberg sure can figure. Wattenberg, who began public life as a truth-stretcher for L.B.J., now applies his facile tongue to the less appealing portions of the American body politic, only to discover that *The Good News Is the Bad News Is Wrong*. Poverty is down, jobs are up and if we all clap our hands America will keep right on getting better and better. Wattenberg takes a few potshots at "scare-mongering" environmentalists and "poor-mouthing" liberals, but his real target is the media. If those bad-news bears weren't such grouches, he suggests, everyone would be happier. Well, not exactly everyone. *T.G.N.I.T.B.N.I.W.* offers a vision of America as benign as Ronald Reagan's smile. According to Wattenberg, a majority of American voters favor *requiring* prayer in public schools. More than three-quarters of the population still believes that sexual relations between adults of the same sex are "always or almost always wrong." More than half the country believed (in 1981) that the United States spent too little on national defense. The bad news is the good news is terrifying.

THE SMOKE RING: Tobacco, Money & Multi-National Politics. *By Peter Taylor. Pantheon. 328 pp. $18.95.* If John Belushi's pusher tried to buy advertising space in *The New York Times*, he'd be arrested. But John Wayne's pusher does it all the time. Cigarette smoking kills more than 300,000 Americans every year and (*pace* Ben Wattenberg) the figures aren't getting any better. Yet cigarette advertising, chased off TV screens in 1970, continues unabated on billboards and magazine covers across the land. Cigarette manufacturers also spend millions each year polishing their images by sponsoring everything from Formula 1 auto racing to operas and symphony orchestras. Philip Morris even has its own branch of the Whitney Museum. The tobacco companies spend similar amounts cultivating sympathetic politicians. In *The Smoke Ring*, British journalist Peter Taylor exposes the combination of tobacco money and right-wing lobbying that twists arms in Washington and spreads nicotine addiction around the world. The payoff, as detailed in this lucidly written, eloquently argued book, is a filter-tipped, foil-wrapped, multi-billion-dollar license to kill.

INTO THE HEART OF THE MIND: An American Quest for Artificial Intelligence. *By Frank Rose. Harper & Row. 209 pp. $15.95.* In the movie *War Games*, Matthew Broderick saves the world from a fate worse than TILT! by getting a gung-ho computer to play lightning tic-tac-toe. After a few tense moments, the machine figures out that nuclear war, like tic-tac-toe, is a futile waste of time. "The only way to win," WOPER's mechanical voice intones solemnly, "is not to play." Unlike some human beings (Ronald Reagan with his Lebanon policy leaps to mind) computers in the real world have long been able to avoid repetitious folly. But a computer capable of true learning does not yet exist.

Frank Rose's *Into the Heart of the Mind* is a fascinating yet exasperating account of the efforts of a group of Berkeley artificial intelligence (A.I.) researchers to teach a computer named Kim No-VAX (actually a Digital Equipment Corporation PDP VAX/780) to think for itself. Rose is first-rate at depicting A.I. hackers and *hondlers* as they hustle for grants (mostly from the Pentagon) and glory. "I think there'll be an all-knowing machine someday," says one. "That's what we're about." But while Rose's ear for mythology-in-the-making is excellent, his depiction of the hard (and soft) science involved in artificial intelligence is ultimately that of an enthusiastic outsider. The result is a book that provokes many more questions than it can answer.

D.D. Guttenplan is a writer who lives in New York City.

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THREE DEGREES ABOVE ZERO: Bell Labs in the Information Age. *By Jeremy Bernstein. Charles Scribner's Sons. 241 pp. $17.95.* Jeremy Bernstein, on the other hand, wades right in. His *Three Degrees Above Zero* pretends to be about A.T.&T.'s Bell Laboratories, but Bernstein is a scientist, not a corporate hagiographer. The obligatory Great Moments in Telephone History—from "Mr. Watson, come here. I want you" (Bell, who had just spilled battery acid on himself, wasn't kidding) to the invention of the transistor and the silicon chip—are all here. But Bernstein's true subject is the nuts and bolts of the scientific process—not just how scientists think and talk but how they solve real-world problems. Chapters on the invention of the transistor and the discovery of black-body radiation are heavy going at first, but are ultimately exhilarating. The discussion of artificial intelligence enlightens as well as entertains. Bernstein is not a flashy writer, but his subjects talk to him as a fellow scientist, and the reader benefits from their respect for his intelligence. □

THEATER.

PAUL BERMAN

Much Ado About Nothing
Cyrano de Bergerac

At the end of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Much Ado About Nothing*, the huge audience at the vast Gershwin Theater leapt to its feet and bellowed approval, from the lowest pit of the orchestra to the highest stratosphere of the balcony, until the company on stage began to beam and laugh and applaud the audience in return. At the end of the same company's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the audience rose again, orchestra and balcony, and bellowed even louder bravos to the heroic Derek Jacobi, bowing grandly at the center of the stage. Unfortunately, audiences have no chance to give a standing ovation to the two plays together, since they can be seen only one at a time. So I'll make up for that myself. Hurray, say I, getting to my feet as best I can in the cramped aisle of this column. This is a standing double review.

Terry Hands directed both plays, and has done it with daring ambidexterity. The shimmering golden trees of *Cyrano de Bergerac* match the silvery trees on translucent panels in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The border of pitch black that occasionally surrounds one set likewise surrounds the other. The music is quasi-Renaissance in *Much Ado* and quasi-Baroque in *Cyrano*, yet always faithful to its own sweet modern character, and the soulful solo cello that opens Act I of *Much Ado* opens Act III of *Cyrano*. What the right hand does, so does the left, and you come to feel that *Much Ado*'s Italy and *Cyrano*'s France are really the same gloriously handsome place.

The plays themselves, under Hands's direction, suddenly look alike. *Much Ado* suffers from a surfeit of Nothing in places where Something should be. Still, you have the sense, as always in Shakespeare, that poetry has flooded its banks and is threatening to drown all and sundry in a sea of gorgeous articulations, which is not only *Cyrano*'s method, too, but practically its theme. Poetry conquers all is the double lesson, made explicit in *Cyrano* by the hero's magnificent ability to make meter and rhyme (in Anthony Burgess's bright, clever translation) go hand in glove with love, honor and a handy way with a sword. Certainly love is everywhere the same in this Italo-France of

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gold and silvery trees. It thrives on indirection, surprise, feints, ambushes and intermediaries. *Much Ado*'s Beatrice and Benedick fall for each other only after the entire court puts in a helping hand. The helping hand with Cyrano and Roxane is Christian's handsome face, and with Christian and Roxane it is Cyrano's ardent eloquence. Pandarus is everywhere at hand.

The lovers themselves, above all, are everywhere the same. Here are Derek Jacobi and Sinead Cusack on one hand, and on the other, Cusack and Jacobi, until you feel, having seen one play and then the other, that lovers must always be Cusack and Jacobi. Cusack does better as Beatrice, which is natural, since Beatrice is an old hand at sharp-tongued sauciness and is full of amorous depths, whereas Roxane must exude a fetching stupidity for three hours and more. As for Jacobi, I read in a newspaper interview that he finds Benedick easier to play because the part is more congenial to his personality. With Cyrano he feels he has to stretch. I wonder if this isn't why his Cyrano is hands down better, indeed is absolutely wonderful. You do feel that Jacobi's Cyrano is stretching. He doesn't look like a superhero; he only acts like one. His multiple superiorities—at wit, rhyme, insolence and hand-to-hand combat—seem like the product of effort, which is exactly how they should seem: little-boy cockiness adopted to conceal a little-boy sense of inferiority caused by his famous handicap, that damned hatrack, peninsula, writing desk, pair of unfurnished flats, perfumer's sign and gothic porch of a nose.

Perhaps it's wrong to speculate on the actor's personality and its relation to the part, especially with English actors, who are supposed to create their roles by building up externals. Of what, then, do these externals consist? Watching Jacobi in *Cyrano*, I felt that vowels are his handiest skill. However many vowel sounds most of us command, Jacobi has a good hand on three times more and can expressively wind his syllables through a long catalogue of vowel variations. Watching his handiwork in *Much Ado* I concluded that, on the contrary, nasality and vocal intensity are his secret strengths. Inconspicuous wheezes, pleading sounds, semipleading sounds, nostrilizations, tonsillations, throat sounds, chest sounds and tongue variations of several sorts are at his command, so that however many vowels he can sound in a single syllable, the possibilities multiply alarmingly by means of these additional techniques. The result is a vast repertory, a mountain of expressive possibility. Thus his excellence as an actor. Then I went back to see him in *Cyrano* a second time, and threw up my hands at deciding what in particular makes Jacobi so good, except that there he was, taking his bows at the end, and that enormous audience was up on its feet, handclapping.

Allow me to resume my seat. *Cyrano* does run a little slow in the beginning, partly because of the uninspired set for the first act, which refuses to frame an opening image for what the story is going to be. In *Much Ado*, it's after the intermission that the tempo gets out of hand. The scenes of outrage after Claudio denounces his betrothed in the

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by Leon Michael

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less-than-successful romantic subplot are played with anger and indignation, as if the ado were about something, which isn't the case. Every one of the lesser roles is performed splendidly in *Cyrano*, but not so in *Much Ado*, though Christopher Benjamin does make a supreme ass of a Dogberry. And yet, as I've already remarked, Hurray—Hurray for that flood of poetry, those radiant sets (especially in the otherwise less accomplished *Much Ado*), that display of inexplicable Jacobi-an technique, that romantic tension between Jacobi and Cusack which would bring me back to see them in anything they perform. Hurray for the ticket policy, which reserves a handful of seats at $10 for anyone willing to get up early and wait in line. And a nice hand for how the Royal Shakespeare Company has fared in Terry Hands's capable . . . fingers. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Golub

Two paintings by Leon Golub in the 1983 Whitney Biennial made the bulk of the works in that cynical and dispiriting exhibition seem like meretricious toys. Scraped onto heavy expanses of unprimed, unmounted canvas—tarpaulins, in effect—his were images of political terror, scenes of torture, though their power can only be partially explained through the unredeemed horror of their subjects. Golub had painted horrifying things before, in a sense had painted scarcely anything except horrifying things, but until these extraordinary canvases I had not seen anything of his that captured the affect of the subjects he treated. Heretofore his *subjects* made us wince, and the paintings seemed merely to raise questions of taste.

Indeed, those earlier canvases seemed exercises in frustration, as though the artist had pushed and piled paint, scratched and tormented pigment until it became a sort of chemical sludge, trying to get it to incarnate feelings that his subjects unquestionably evoked even if the paintings never did. This frustration was nowhere more evident than in the "Napalm" series he painted in response to the enormities of Vietnam combat. These were images of terminally scorched humans depicted through scraped, reddened paint, as though the treatment of the paint re-enacted the effect of this most fearsome of chemical weapons. But of course the distances between surface and subject were too great for the paintings to do more than show an agony it was almost impertinent to suppose they could emblematize, and the viewer turned away in embarrassment and discomfort. What had begun as invocation ended as portentousness.

So until quite recently, Golub's paintings have been those of a man whose moral concerns have coexisted uneasily with certain aspirations for his art, which seemed doomed to remain mythic. For they were the aspirations of Pygmalion. Pygmalion fulfilled an erotic longing by a magical artistic transformation: the ivory votive image he fashioned of Aphrodite was animated by that goddess, who had until then refused him. Now she lay with him as Galatea, medium transacted into the flesh of love, art become life. Well, something as unlikely as this took place in the Whitney canvases, some magical breakthrough to a power Golub's earlier works failed to coax into paint. And the Whitney canvases turn out to be representative of all Golub's new work, uncannily successful.

Ten of his large recent canvases may be seen at the New Museum in New York City, until November 25, where they are displayed in the context of his early and middle periods. It is always instructive to survey an artistic life in the framework of a retrospective exhibition, but this abrupt and unexpected achievement is a rare kind of occurrence. It is a challenge to our understanding of the creative process—that a painter distinguished chiefly by the intensity of his effort should, as if in answer to his prayer, touch at last on artistic greatness.

The paintings are of terrorists, interrogators, mercenaries, whom we see at work, as it were, with their victims; and at play, as it were, with girlfriends leached of any attribute save those of arid sexual recreation. The victims too are leached of all features save those through which they suffer the methodical inflictions of men past caring. Little by way of information or confession can be agonized out of the trussed and naked bodies, since one victim has his head tied up in a black sack, and another has her mouth taped shut. In one scene of interrogation (not exhibited at the New Museum), the victim is suspended upside down, as helpless as the carcass of beef in Rembrandt's moving depiction, while one of the tormentors examines his instrument to see, perhaps, if it has not been damaged by a body whose bones remain the only agent of resistance. All the figures, perhaps even the victims if we knew their histories, are moral monsters—sometimes black, sometimes white; sometimes with Third World faces, sometimes Yanks; sometimes government forces, as evidenced by jackboots and puffed breeches,

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sometimes rebels, wearing the anonymous utilitarian vestments, coveralls and fatigues, of the underground fighter. It is as though there is little to choose between the sides, as though it cannot deeply matter who wins or loses. Like mercenaries, they are all on the side they are on, though they could as easily be on the other. They are there for the fun and the money.

The inhumanities are utterly unredeemed, by comparison, say, with those in depictions of martyrdoms. I once learned of a series of these done by Rubens, and I expected them to be thrillingly deep, since the relationship between martyr and martyrizer has traditionally been as fateful and elemental as the relationship between mother and child, or between lovers. If one believes that suffering redeems sin, then each martyr re-enacts the sacrifice familiar from the vast number of crucifixions which after all form so substantial a segment of our artistic culture, and the martyrizer accordingly has a cosmic role to play. But after the decision by the Council of Trent to use depictions of suffering to *cause* vicarious suffering on the part of viewers, Christian art became lurid, as I am afraid Rubens's scenes of martyrdom finally turned out to be—no more capable of augmenting the anguish shown than, say, the earlier paintings of Golub are. These new paintings depict political realities unredeemed by any of the purposes politics is supposed to serve. But they nevertheless have a power that even the redemptive martyrdoms lack—so the power cannot derive solely from the subject matter.

To understand it, it seems to me, we must incorporate as part of the work the relationship in which the artist depicts *himself* as standing to his subjects. For he does not merely depict them, as it were, from without: he engages with these persons as someone who has somehow gained their confidence. It is as though they have allowed him entry into their frightening, airless places. He addresses them as a photographer who seems to show himself almost as indifferent to the enormities he sees as the agents of those enormities themselves are. It is as though he is there, in the same terrible space as victims and tormentors, asking the latter to stop for a moment and pose for what today is called a "photo opportunity." They are asked to say Cheese. And good-naturedly they comply, grinning at the camera, hamming it up, horsing around, waving to the camera, perhaps pointing at what they are working over, as indifferent to it as a mechanic might be to an axle. They might even ask for a copy to send home, so deeply have the realities of suffering receded for them. In a way they act toward the subject of pain the way we as museum-goers act toward depictions of pain.

The same interlocking glances fix the artist together with his subjects in the paintings of mercenaries on their days off: one poses, smirking, with a woman who clutches his crotch. Another woman sits on a black man's knee lolling a suggestive tongue at the camera, waving a bottle. In one painting, a member of the White Squad looks over his shoulder while he stuffs someone—dead or alive?—in the coffin-shaped trunk of an automobile, and appears undisturbed by the interruption, as though he were thinking, Oh, it's only you. Another time the photographer catches a mercenary with three subdued blacks at pistol point, as proud as a hunter with so many elk.

The power of the works derives from their moral optics, from the fact that the artist has entered the world he had previously been separated from by his noisy surfaces. Of course the new surfaces have a great interest. The figures have the jerky marionettelike quality of some of Egon Schiele's painted portraits. The heads have a kind of Sienese condensation, and their teeth are as memorable as those in Mantegna. By comparison with the earlier work, the paint has almost abandoned the canvas: there remain only dry scrapes, with the tonal feeling of fresco. All the energy is in the complicity between painter and persons with whom he has made a bargain. They are finally like the images of Diane Arbus, which had to be bizarre and extreme in order to raise the question of how she managed to negotiate the photograph. The catalogue says, "The artist's placement of the viewer in a precarious psychological relationship to the depicted scene has become the fundamental mechanism at work." It has not. We are not involved at all because the artist has put himself there instead, at the cost of suspending his judgment. Those men are not looking at us but at him. We see their glances, but we are not seen.

Lately Golub has stressed in interviews that he is only a reporter. The energy of the painting lies in the price

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the reporter has had to pay in order to get the news: he has to become part of the news by sacrificing a propensity to condemn and by stifling moral impulse. For a moral personality as strong as Golub's this represents a terrible cost. I am not certain that art even in its highest aspirations merits such a cost. But his willingness to shoulder that price gives his work an undeniably Faustian dimension—with the consequence that the political subject has become only one element in a mythic transformation which has morality as another and art itself as a third. The drama is as intense as any the stage holds or can hold.

I could not help but notice that several of the late paintings (and none of the early ones) are owned by Doris and Charles Saatchi, of London. Charles Saatchi is one of the great powers in today's art world, and his acquisitions here put me in mind of a great Socratic question. In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates asks whether the gods love something because it is good, or whether it is good only because they love it. I used to think that an artist was important if collected by Saatchi, that that was what importance had come to. I now see that it is occasionally possible for Saatchi to collect what is independently important, as these paintings are. The show will travel to La Jolla, California, to Chicago and Montreal, and finally to the Corcoran in Washington, D.C. It deserves your serious attention if you are within reach of any of those places. □

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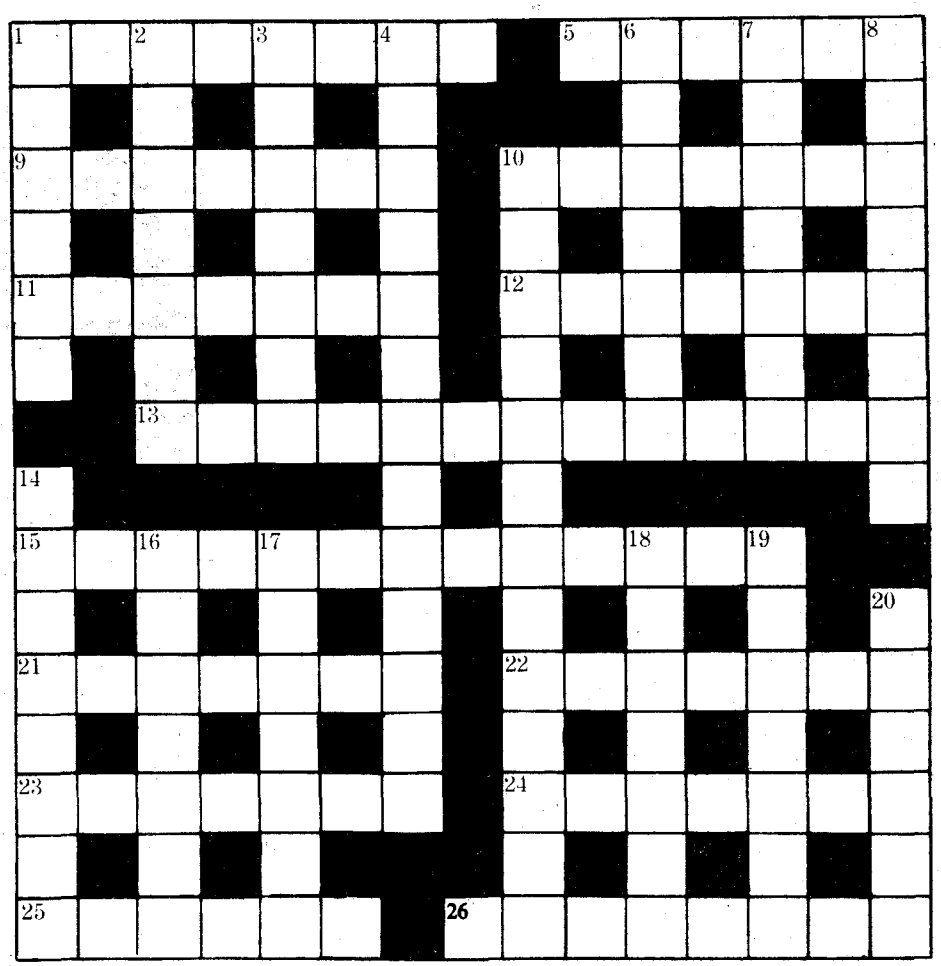
FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Stop? Seem confused about it in the plant. (8)
5 and 26 The heads of his establishment were not square, at any rate. (6,8)
9 Try all but the end, with a little weight? Beat this! (7)
10 Fastens locks, though the rain causes some trouble. (4,3)
11 In ginseng or gentian, stuff is obvious. (7)
12 Sick? In vain, as far as the bad guy is concerned! (7)
13 It might circle about the horn. (The bicyclist had better be doing it!) (8,5)
15 The sort of debit some mind might be divesting a soul. (13)
21 What Mary had going on ten—somewhat giddy, but bright! (7)
22 It's one of the things you sit on—much is, I find, awkward. (7)
23 A slangy way to cheat on someone (more than once, obviously.) (3-4)
24 More like a level surface, as one way to pour on the oil. (7)
25 The medical man seems to be on the border of getting to scoop out the unwanted material. (6)
26 See 5

DOWN

1 See 4
2 What a freeloader does if the shower is off, perhaps. (7)
3 When in trouble, run—even break down the self-control! (7)
4 and 1 down Treat them of the earth badly—that's the central issue. (3,5,2,3,6)
6 What's the law about a false idol when brought down? (4,3)
7 We hear it got trampled—get in a sort after 5. (7)
8 Roundly, naturally—whether or not one puts tea inside, by the sound of it. (8)
10 and 16 A case of moving the party indoors, because a party isn't liked if you are. (6,2,2,3,7)
14 Is a shell that won't go off about dead, as they say? You'll get flattered a lot this way! (8)
16 See 10 down
17 Browning's was at night, but someone might have to take the chair here. (7)
18 Formerly, what was staked out, as one might cry. (7)
19 The list, though badly prepared, reminds one of Scottish glory. (7)
20 A point of such as Aesop's stories, entirely apart from the right and the wrong of it. (6)

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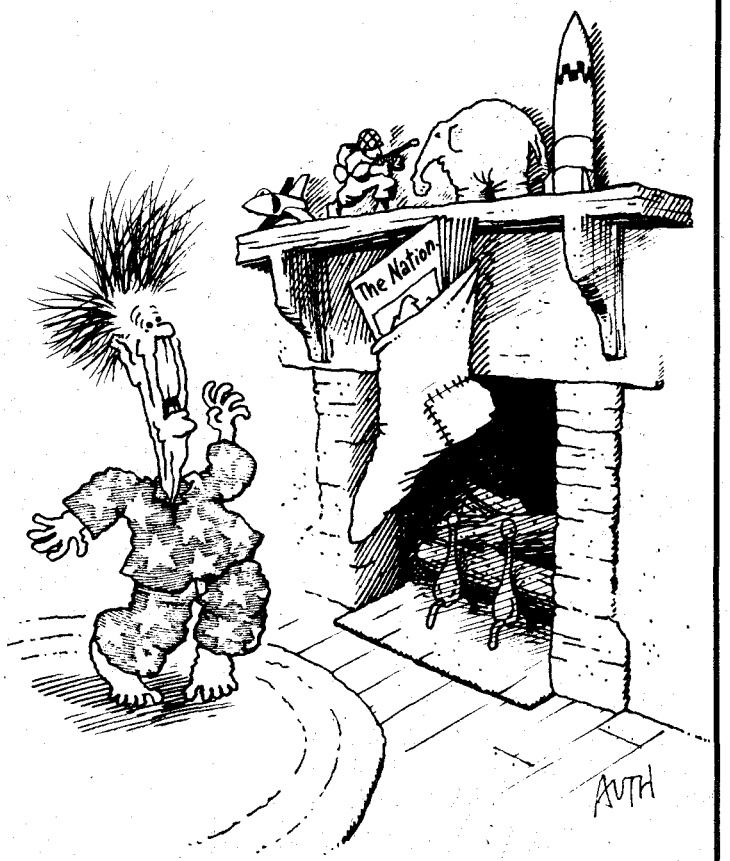

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